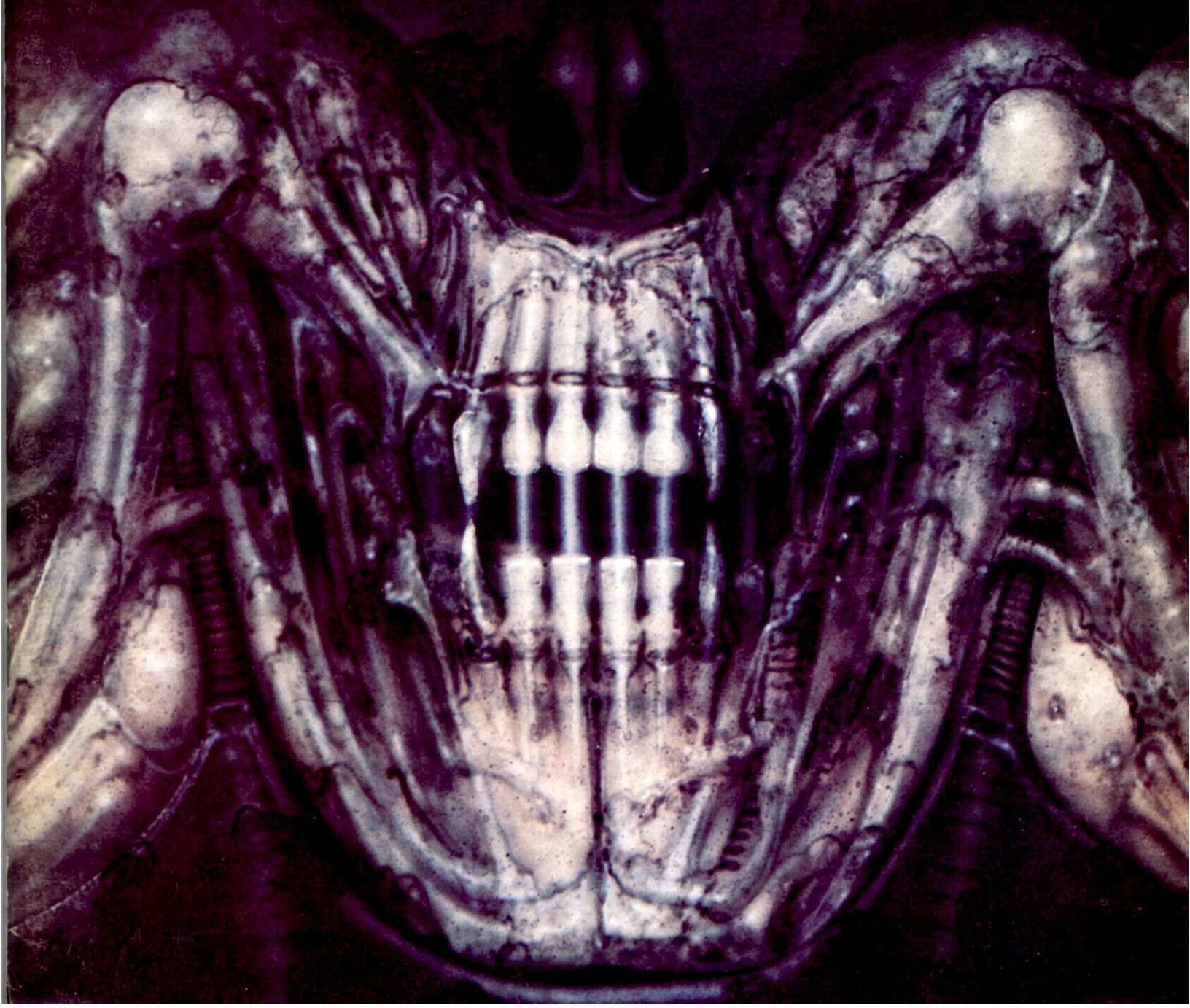


CINEFANTASTIQUE®

Volume 9 Number 1 \$2.50

ALIEN



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Front cover: H. R. Giger's painting from the *Necronomicon*, inspiration for the monster in ALIEN. David Matthews: Preproduction of FLESH GORDON II: Back Cover

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1

SENSE OF WONDER by Frederick S. Clarke

ALIEN has turned out to be the one consolation in a dreary summer parade of rehashed horror, including NIGHTWING, THE AMITYVILLE HORROR, PROPHECY and DRACULA, losers all. Of course, ALIEN does a good deal of its own rehashing. The only difference is, it does it well. And for that we have director Ridley Scott to thank, for putting back the tension and urgency of realism in outer space, perhaps better than anyone since Stanley Kubrick in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. Interviews with Scott, by Mark Patrick Carducci and Glenn Lovell, lead off this issue devoted to "Making ALIEN: Behind the Scenes," and explain how Scott managed to make a '50s science fiction B-picture credible for the '70s.

Contrasting Ridley Scott's sleek veneer of lived-in authenticity, are the film's bizarre Alien designs by Swiss surrealist H. R. Giger. Giger's concept of *biomechanics* refreshes old science fiction clichés by giving them a new visual aesthetic, much in the way Trumbull's glowing UFOs made the refurbished '50s themes of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND more palatable. Glenn Lovell interviewed Giger during his U. S. publicity tour, and we sent our Paris correspondent, Frederic Albert Levy, to Giger's home in Zurich to learn in detail how haunted images from the artist's *Necronomicon* served as a guide for the film's most disturbing elements (see cover and centerfold art).

Other interviews on ALIEN presented in this issue were selected to highlight the contributions of key members of the film's creative team, who have not as yet spoken out in print about their work, despite the huge amount of publicity the film has garnered. Jordan R. Fox spoke to mechanical effects expert Carlo Rambaldi in Hollywood to learn the story behind the articulated alien heads that made Giger's Alien design come alive. London correspondents Mike Childs and Alan Jones talked with Bolaji Badejo, the young black actor who played the Alien, Roger Dicken, the talented effects man responsible for the small alien forms in the film, production designer Michael Seymour and associate producer Ivor Powell. And to clear up the controversy surrounding the film's derivative screenplay, we interviewed producers Walter Hill and David Giler. □

SATURN 3

In 1975, during the location shooting of *LUCKY LADY*, production designer John Barry told director Stanley Donen an idea for a story called *SATURN 3*. Donen encouraged Barry to develop the story and suggested novelist Martin Amis as screenwriter. Film tycoon Sir Lew Grade also expressed interest in the property when told of it by Donen. Apparently, Grade found himself sitting next to Farrah Fawcett-Majors on a flight to America, and when she read the *SATURN 3* script and agreed to do it, the project became a growing concern. In January of this year, *SATURN 3* went before the cameras at Shepperton Studios, with Stanley Donen as executive producer and John Barry signed as director.

According to Donen, *SATURN 3* is "not a comic strip, but sensuous and sensual science fiction. It's probably closer to the real Frankenstein story than a Hitchcock thriller. It's meant to frighten in an unusual way." Production designer Stuart Craig's concept for the film's characteristic robot, Hector, has made the production join the ranks of the closed-set brigade. Hector is eight feet tall and his fantastic anatomy is based heavily on Leonardo DaVinci anatomical drawings. There are two other, smaller robots, Rivet and Morfax, which are a spacecraft and a moon-buggy, respectively.

The plot follows two research chemists (Majors and Kirk Douglas), living underground on a moon of Saturn, working on a program to solve Earth's nutrition problem. When a "robot helper" is dispatched to speed up their work, it arrives in the charge of psychotic killer Captain James (Harvey Keitel), who has murdered the pilot of the shuttle and taken his place. The scientists are left to do battle against James and the rogue robot, who develops an unhealthy fondness for Majors.

On the first day of shooting in January, John Barry was replaced as director, "not voluntarily." Rumor is that Kirk Douglas wanted to direct and in fact did so for two days before Donen took over the helm. Indications are that the stars were not on the best of terms, and that Barry might not have been able to handle them. Barry, spiritually defeated, went on to work on *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* [see page 5], directing second unit work. On May 31, he came down with a sudden attack of meningitis and, later that day, he died. No one knows how Barry contracted the disease, and no one else on the set was infected, but Barry's depression over losing *SATURN 3* may have lowered his resistance to illness. He was only 43 years old.

SATURN 3 is expected for Christmas release by ITC. □

by Patrick Hobby

Farrah Fawcett-Majors and Kirk Douglas (in silver suits) greet Captain James (Harvey Keitel), who carries a mysterious metal canister, upon arrival at the underground lab on SATURN 3.



Robert Wise

Stardate 7907.22: Hailing Frequencies open at last.

Well on their way toward completing a projected 200 special effects shots, the makers of *STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE* are confident that the *Enterprise* will be airborne in time for the opening on December 7. To call the film "long-awaited" would be a cliché, and a gross understatement. Keenly aware of the anticipation of the *STAR TREK* fans—to say nothing of an increasingly science fiction conscious public—producer Gene Roddenberry has been making every effort to reward them for their patience. People working behind the scenes on *STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE* are promising special effects that will boldly go where no film has gone before. And, although such statements often prove to be hype, there is reason for optimism in the fact that Douglas Trumbull and John Dykstra are joining forces to produce those effects. Will *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*, multiplied by *STAR WARS*, equal astronomical boxoffice? Hopes are high at Paramount, where already there is talk of the possibility of a sequel—and perhaps, after a few more sequels, a new TV series featuring the Captain Will Decker character created for the film.

At the moment, of course, any information about a sequel would have to be classified as rumor, a syndrome from which this film has already suffered more than its share, both before and during production. (There was a rumor, for example, that the film would contain a

by Preston Neal Jones

race of monoped. This scuttlebut can be traced to a giant ruby statue on the planet Vulcan. Most of the statue will be created optically, but a life-size foot was built for a scene at the base of the statue—hence, the gossip about the one-legged aliens). Still, if the film succeeds, it will have more of a head start than most on the preparation for a sequel.

Originally built for the planned revival of the TV series, the *Enterprise* set contains many sections not used in the feature. *STAR TREK* fans following the progress of the film are already aware that the story calls for the *Enterprise* to be rushed out of dry dock when an emergency arises. Not many know, however, that the whole concept of the dry dock resulted from the pressures of meeting the production schedule. When it appeared that the sets could not be finished in time for the starting date, it was written into the script that the ship was to take off before it is ready. In fact, at one point, Roddenberry was mulling over the idea of having the studio grip crew on camera during the early part of the shooting, dressed in Federation uniforms and hammering away. This notion was abandoned when he realized that it would cause friction with the Screen Extra's Guild.

As the *STAR TREK* project progressed from a TV series revival to a major production, the budget kept growing in accordance with each change of status. Consequently, the *Enterprise* was constantly being refurbished and improved. The final product is an impressive amalgam of motion picture art direction and futuristic aerospace technology. At the outset, Roddenberry had made it clear to those who would be creating hardware for the ship that he wanted to see nothing on screen which had been invented in real life. "If it already exists," said the producer, "it's out." The *Enterprise* bridge is larger than it was in the original series, and much of the gadgetry has been wired to be operated by the actors themselves, instead of unseen crew members behind walls. As a result, the mammoth set can do practically anything but fly.

Another improvement in the revised bridge is its design as a complete, 360-degree entity. No longer must the camera focus on merely one familiar section of the bridge. The new, enclosed set has

facilitated a greater variety of action and camera angles. It created a problem, however, when a discovery was made that the crew, in their zeal to complete the set on time, had built it complete with a ceiling, but without any wild sections that could be moved to accommodate the camera. The crew then had to return with saws and make the set a little more workable.

Of course, there are mechanical problems which must be solved on any movie, but *STAR TREK*, intrinsically involved as it is with a technology yet unborn, found itself faced with many other mishaps besides that all too solid set. Not the least of these problems were those involving props and costume accessories, such as the wrist communicators and the life-monitoring systems. In order to give the appearance of being suspended without a bracelet, each were fitted with a little band which went halfway around the wrist and was fastened with the aid of rivets. Some of the rivets proved painfully long, and had to be readjusted. Monitor devices for life functions were designed to be worn as belt attachments. In one of the early sequences, the *Enterprise* encounters difficulty taking off, and the crew is buffeted from railing to railing. The cast, having had a lot of practice with such scenes in the original series, survived the ordeal, but many of the belt buckles did not. Because most of the railings happened to be at waist level, many of the devices were crushed and had to be replaced.

There were other accidents which threatened to leave Mr. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) without his ears and the *Enterprise* without its captain. Newly-molded latex Spock ears, designed by Fred B. Phillips and his makeup crew, were baking in the oven overnight, but the studio nightwatchman who had been asked to shut off the oven at a particular time failed to do so. The ears melted into puddles, and a variety of substitute ears, including the old ones from the TV series, had to be pressed into emergency service. Sharp-eyed devotees, on their fifth or sixth viewing of the movie, may wish to note the slight rise and fall of Spock's ear-size from scene to scene. A more serious emergency occurred when William Shatner, who had not been properly warned about the flooring of a

particularly high set in a certain key sequence, stepped off onto one of the sections which had not been built to support personnel, and fell through it up to his armpits. Had he not been pulled back, he might have dropped sixty feet. Just what was the nature of this set and its place in the story? No one is saying. Roddenberry and Paramount are trying to maximize audience enjoyment by minimizing advance plot information—and thus, it is hoped, minimizing imitation by TV or low-budget filmmakers. Keeping the lid on such an exciting property, of course, has not been easy. During production, blueprints of the set were stolen and offered to the president of the Star Trek Fan Club, who promptly blew the whistle on the thief. A pilfered copy of the screenplay was duplicated and sold briefly under the counter at a Hollywood book shop until Paramount and the law caught up with it. Still missing, however, is a large book containing photographs of the film's models. While being very close-mouthed about the specific story elements, many participants in the film's creation are making no secret of their delight with the project. Craftspeople who have been encouraged to stretch their imaginations and expertise have found the experience exhilarating. They also speak highly of the contributions of director Robert Wise. Even the person who took the script from the set may find some surprises upon viewing the final film, thanks to directorial touches, and script revisions requisitioned by Wise during shooting.

The *Enterprise*, in its time, has weathered every threat from Klingons to tribbles to network cancellation. Now, we are anxiously looking toward December 7th, to determine whether the ship has survived its greatest danger of all: the time leap from 1969 to 1979. □

but nothing is finalized. The major hangup seems to be the wait for an acceptable budget to be drawn up. With very rough guess-timates projecting a total cost in excess of \$15 million (unprecedented for a three-hour telefilm), it remains to be seen whether or not ABC and Universal will elect to cough up such a sizeable piece of change on their own. There is some talk, however, that either Universal's or ABC's feature film division may get in on the financing.

Jordan R. Fox and Paul Mandell

Preproducing CHILDHOOD'S END for television: No Stop-Motion Animation

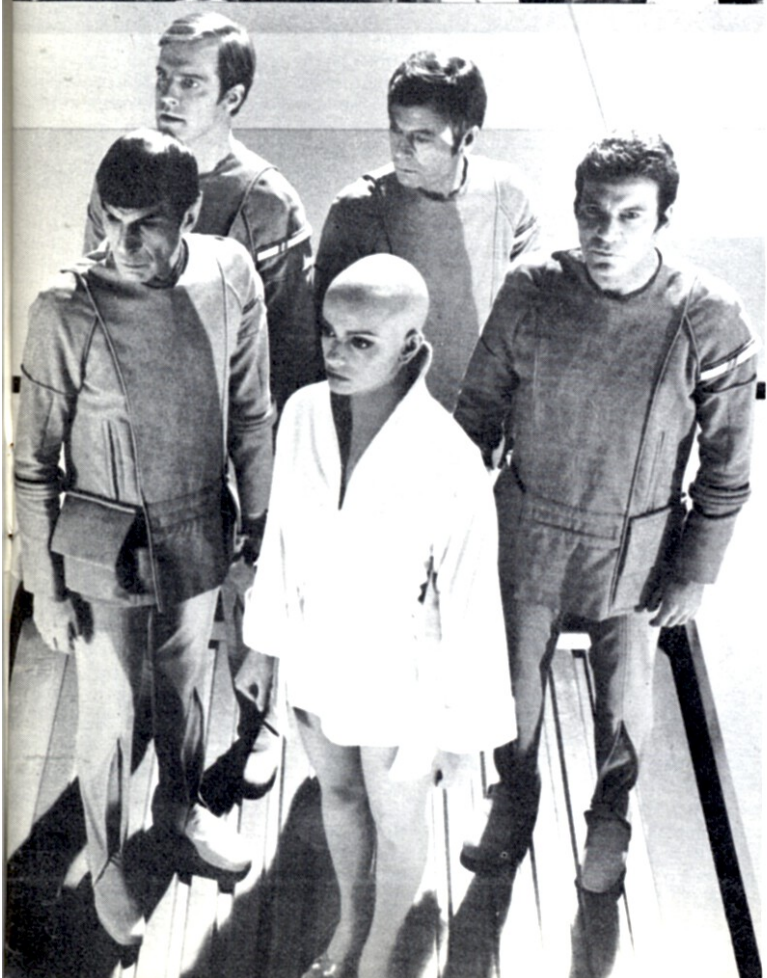
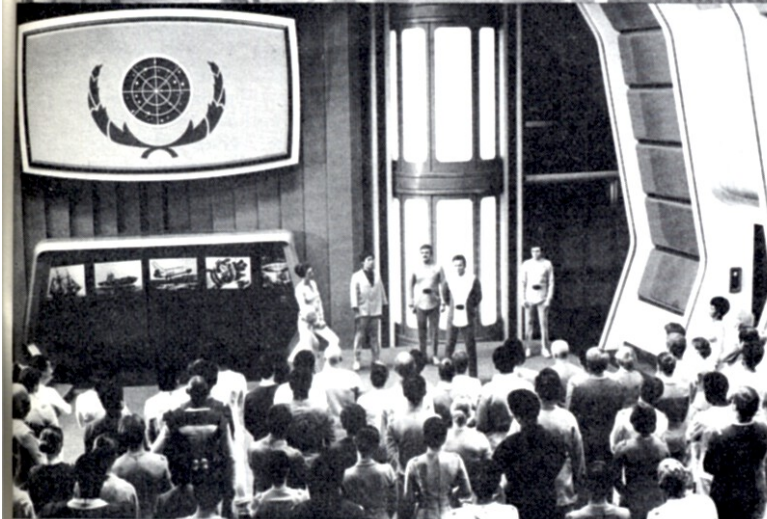
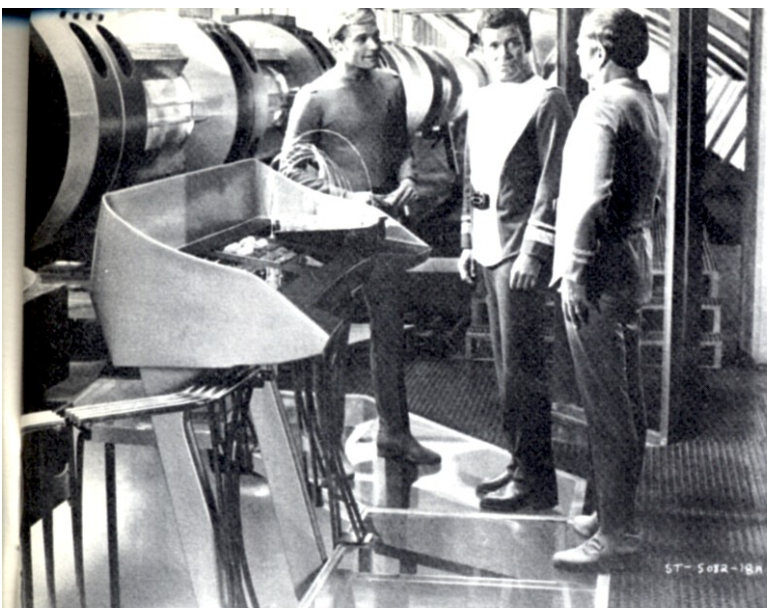
The legal problems over film rights to Arthur C. Clarke's *CHILDHOOD'S END* [see 8:4:35], which had put the ambitious ABC/Universal-TV project into limbo, have been resolved. Apparently, difficulties stemmed much more from the actions of Clarke's agents than from the science fiction grandmaster himself.

Clarke has seen the first draft, written by executive producer Phil DeGuerre, and says, "It's an excellent script. I'm quite hopeful." On July 15, the script came down to

David Garber and Wayne Smith, directors of special effects at Universal's Hartland facility, and preproduction is in its raw stages. For now, some limited preproduction artwork has been commissioned, but no concrete production start date has been set. Clarke's story features an alien race called Overlords, about which Garber commented: "We were thinking of doing the Overlords in stop-motion. If we had the money and the time, I would prefer not to do it in stop-motion, because the continuity

would be much better using a suited actor. However, for the shots of the Overlords flying above the city in longshot, it would be nice to go to stop-motion. The real problem lies in combining that with the live-action medium. For me, it's very borderline."

Then, as of July, producer DeGuerre favored the idea of hiring Rick Baker to do a man-in-a-suit makeup—now, supposedly, stop-motion has been ruled out for *CHILDHOOD'S END*. The producer hopes Baker will be signed,



Three astronauts on a deep space mission for over a year return to earth, crash landing in the Pacific Ocean when they are unable to get landing instructions from their base. One man is killed by the crash, but Newman (Steve Barkett) and Mathews (Larry Latham) manage to get ashore. They soon discover that the world has been decimated by a nuclear and biological war. The absence of corpses in the ruined cities is a result of the cannibalistic tendencies of deformed mutants which now prey on the living for their food. The area is also plagued by a band of mercenaries who have escaped the effects of the war. The gang, led by the psychotic Cutter (Sid Haig), searches for other survivors, killing the men, raping the women and enslaving the children. One woman prisoner escapes from Cutter's gang, meets Newman, and they plan to meet the future together. But a vengeful Cutter pursues them.

Such is the plot of *THE AFTERMATH*, a film written, produced, directed and starring Steve Barkett, based on an idea he had almost a decade ago. After a hit-and-miss acting career (Barkett appeared in Ted Mikel's *THE CORPSE GRINDERS* in 1973), he formalized this idea in 1974: "I wanted to do a film that could be done cheaply, but visually would have a look of quality way beyond its means. I also wanted to incorporate my own personal philosophy and points of view about disillusionment with the world." Barkett set up a partnership with actor Stanley Livingston (of *MY THREE SONS* fame), putting a year into preproduction only to see funds promised by a Midwest banker evaporate. The two peddled the project to the exploitation studios and distributors, and all they got was the cold shoulder. The partnership dissolved, and *THE AFTERMATH* went under. It was during this time that Barkett formed an alliance with animator Jim Danforth. "Jim was very humble and unassuming," says Barkett. "Because of his demeanor, I was misled to believe that Jim and I could be a powerful team together." Barkett thought the two would be able to develop a Schneer-Harryhausen relationship. They began to make inroads trying to line up backers for several proposals, one of which later became *TIMEGATE* [see 8:48]. Barkett and Danforth broke up when Barkett realized that "Jim didn't want a Schneer. He wanted to be a Schneer. Jim feels the only way he can make a movie the way he wants is if he has complete control."

Early in 1977, the project was revived when a small-time producer bought the script and hired Barkett to direct. Disputes with the producer, who wanted to film retitled *INVASION OF THE MUTANT PEOPLE*, and a director of photography who refused to take orders made Barkett's task impossible. The producer's interference finally caused Barkett to walk off

by Dan Scapperotti

the set. When the production collapsed, the producer sold the property back to Barkett for \$21,000. An old friend of Barkett's "put up money," says the director, "plus another \$30,000 to boot. Ultimately, the film cost me around \$150,000 to complete. There was never a budget per se. All the money came from my friend, except for \$16,000 of my own." Barkett rented a Burbank building which doubled as a special effects shop and soundstage, and hired a small but competent crew to finish production.

Due to the demands of the genre, the success of *THE AFTERMATH* will depend on the effectiveness of its visuals. While much of the action is routine battles, there will be some stunning special effects: the city of Los Angeles in ruins, a radiation storm, and the returning space probe highlight the film. Robert Skotak, who at present is working on *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS* for Roger Corman, has created matte paintings for *THE AFTERMATH*, showing the desolation and wreckage of what once had been a thriving metropolis. Barkett explained, "Many of the effects shots were done in-camera. This is very time consuming, but it helps eliminate registration flutter and color imbalance on miniature perspective shots. The results are breathtaking."

Interestingly enough, Jim Danforth plays a role in the final film, appearing as the ill-fated crewman in the opening scenes. Danforth later did a painting which was used as the poster art for *THE AFTERMATH*.

Barkett admits, "As a director, I am not easy to work with for people who are used to a more paper-bound type of production. I have blocking in mind when I reach the set. I help dress it myself and design it myself. I rehearse only on the set and expect actors to know their lines. I rarely improvise scenes, but often play action scenes differently than it appears on paper." In discussing the finished film, Barkett claims, "The film certainly has its flaws, but I think everyone will be amazed by its production values, the things I'm trying to say, and the manner in which they are said. There is no lack of action and there is a great deal of violence. But it is well-motivated and has an important point to make." □

Jim Danforth and poster art.



THE BLACK HOLE

Once one of the most respected merchandisers of cinematic fantasy, the Walt Disney Studios have recently fallen into critical disfavor as producers of durable *cinéfantastique*. Over the years, the studio has been typed as purveyors of a bland form of "family cinema," relegating Disney classics such as 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA and FANTASIA to the shelf of memory. With the current production of THE BLACK HOLE, their most technically and financially ambitious film to date, there is every reason to hope that the Disney Studios will revive their past reputation with a vengeance.

The original concept for THE BLACK HOLE began in 1974 with Winston Hibler, a producer at the studio. At that time, THE BLACK HOLE seemed to be an idea largely ignored despite Hibler's interest, although there were periodic attempts by other studio personnel to initiate the project. But Hibler died before he could produce it.

Then, early in 1977, obviously stimulated by the success of STAR WARS, THE BLACK HOLE was picked up by producer Ron Miller as a definite project at the studio. Miller has produced nearly all the television shows and features for Disney during the past seven years. At the time when Miller began active production on THE BLACK HOLE, it was announced under the title SPACE PROBE 1. Further marketing research, however, under the guidance of ad chief Martin Rabinovitch, dictated a change. After considering over 500 titles (at one time, nearly all Disney Studio employees were asked to make suggestions), THE BLACK HOLE was finally settled on as giving the proper image, conveying the power and mystique that Disney hopes will be captured in the final film, budgeted at \$20 million.

The story opens with the discovery, by the crew of exploratory spaceship *Palomino* (Anthony Perkins, Yvette Mimieux, Ernest Borgnine, Joseph Bottoms and Robert Forster), of the massive *Cygnus*, a gigantic derelict spaceship assumed lost for twenty years. Adding to the mystery is the fact that the *Cygnus* is "moored" to the

by Paul Sammon

Anthony Perkins, "Max" and Yvette Mimieux on the bridge of the Cygnus.

lip of an immensely powerful 'black hole.' The *Palomino* crew finds Hans Reinhardt (Maximilian Schell), an eccentric genius, ruling the *Cygnus* with a literal iron hand; Reinhardt has created an enormous number and variety of robots which operate the *Cygnus* under the secondary control of Max, the ultimate automaton, who is in turn answerable only to Reinhardt. The crew of the *Palomino* slowly come to realize that they are being held virtual prisoners on the *Cygnus*, as it drifts closer to a final encounter with the Hole. An escape attempt ends in the death of some of the principals, yet several do succeed in leaving the *Cygnus* as it begins to tear itself apart in the grip of the Hole's primal forces. But the survivors find they have gone from the pan into the fire: jettisoning away from the doomed *Cygnus* in a probe vehicle, they are sucked directly into the Hole, where a final, spectacular encounter takes place.

Any mention of special effects immediately calls to mind that the Disney Studios have long been associated with the finest in state-of-the-art technology (such as the multi-plane camera designed by Ub Iwerks in the late Thirties). THE BLACK HOLE promises to be no exception to this rule—the film's technical roster is staggering. Peter Ellenshaw, production designer and director of special effects on THE BLACK HOLE, began as a matte painter in England, working on Alexander Korda's THIEF OF BAGDAD (1940), among others. Director of mechanical effects is Danny Lee, who did many of the physical effects for IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD, WORLD, and director of cel animation, Joe Hale (whose specialty is wedding live-action and animated footage, used in hundreds of Disney shows), is animating laser ray effects and is in charge of the tremendous amount of rotoscoping in the film. All three are veterans of decades of collective work at Disney and elsewhere.

Of special interest are the dual directors of special photographic effects, Art Cruickshank (Oscar winner for FANTASTIC VOYAGE) and Eustace Lycett (Oscar winner for MARY POPPINS and BED-KNOBS AND BROOMSTICKS). Lycett's primary concern on THE

BLACK HOLE is handling Disney's triple-headed optical printer, used in compositing the film's blue screen work. Cruickshank is in charge of photographing miniatures, using ACES—the Automated Camera Effects System. The computer-controlled system, designed by Cruickshank, Lycett, Don Iwerks (son of Ub Iwerks), David Snyder and David English, is the most sophisticated and exacting repeatable-move camera extant, costing roughly \$1 million of THE BLACK HOLE's budget.

However, with only \$100,000, Don Iwerks has produced another, vastly simplified repeatable movement system for THE BLACK HOLE which is a definite breakthrough: the Matte Scan Camera. Matte painting supervisor Harrison Ellenshaw (son of Peter Ellenshaw) is working with the Matte Scan system on THE BLACK HOLE, shooting matte paintings with rear screen elements involving live-action and miniature effects photography. In one sequence, which Ellenshaw calls the Entrance to the Observatory, seven action plates are worked into one painting by using the Matte Scan Camera. The shot shows the *Palomino* crew riding an elevator to the *Cygnus*' captain's tower. Suddenly the doors open, the camera following them as they step directly into the Observatory action plate, all in one continuous shot. "This is one of our pet shots," chuckles Ellenshaw, "and it works fairly well. What enabled us to do it was the Matte Scan Camera."

"We've been working solidly on THE BLACK HOLE since January 1978," continues Ellenshaw. "And I mean working. Prior to my involvement on HOLE, the most satisfying project I'd had was when I was contracted out to ILM [John Dykstra's Industrial, Light and Magic company] to do matte work on STAR WARS. But THE BLACK HOLE, in quantity alone, certainly surpasses anything I did for George Lucas. We have 150 matte shots in THE BLACK HOLE, and with that much material to work with, you just can't let a few mistakes slip by or settle for a 90% effectiveness ratio. 10% of 150 is 15 bad mattes, and that's just too many. On a project of this size, you have to shoot for a 100% success ratio. MARY POPPINS had 75-80 mattes, so our 150 is quite a load."

The sodium-yellow prism camera, the envy of the matte-making community, and a specialty at the Disney effects department, will not be used on THE BLACK HOLE, because it is currently impossible to adapt the system to accept anamorphic lenses (the film is being shot in widescreen). "The sodium camera was a tremendous loss for us," says Ellenshaw. "We had to use blue screen, which is not as satisfactory in the sense that it's not as quick." Effects work on THE BLACK HOLE is expected to continue well into December, with an answer print available in late November. The film's premiere is set for December 20, in Los Angeles at Century City. □

'SALEM'S LOT Tobe Hooper helms TVer

Cast and crew left July 6 for Southern California locations to begin work on 'SALEM'S LOT, a four-hour long CBS-TV mini-series based on Stephen King's novel, to be aired on two successive nights early in 1980. The most startling news connected to this project is that Tobe Hooper (THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE) has been signed as director. This after his plunge into obscurity caused by leaving the production of THE DARK (finished by John "Bud" Cardos) for mysterious reasons.

Hooper, whose films are generally agreed to be among the most intense horror movies of the seventies (despite the divergent critical opinion on them), is perhaps the last person one would expect to find directing a network mini-series. But then, the 1975 King novel—about the start of a vampire colony in modern New England—is itself far from conventional prime time source material. Penning the teleplay is Paul Monash, creator of the highly-regarded sixties TV series JUDD FOR THE DEFENSE, and producer of the film BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID. Richard Kobritz is producing, with Stirling Silliphant as executive producer for Warner Brothers TV.

As one might expect, some liberties have been taken with the characterizations in King's story, although its premise has been scrupulously adhered to. The Susan Norton character (Bonnie Bedelia), instead of being a small-town girl yearning to leave home, is a career woman returning to 'Salem's Lot for a vacation. David Soul portrays the writer drawn to the village by the evil of Marsten House, and the need to exorcise—through a novel—his childhood demons regarding the house's curse. Lance Kerwin plays the sullen but confident youngster fascinated by monsters and horror movies—and thus one of the first villagers to sense the web of vampirism caused by the reoccupation of Marsten House. To James Mason falls the expanded role of Straker, the Old World antique dealer who enters 'Salem's Lot as an emissary of the vampire who will slowly infect the town. And Reggie Nalder must endure a daily two-hour makeup application for his portrayal of the vampire.

The difficulty in adapting 'SALEM'S LOT seems not so much in toning down—or in some cases eliminating—its considerable violence, but dealing with the overall intensity of the tale. Not much physical action occurs in the first half of the book; even in its second half, with the assorted vampire brawls. It is the suggestion of the inevitable which grows almost unbearable. Despite these obstacles, the mini-series format may indeed be ideal for its adaptation. King's long and complex story would be nearly impossible to bring to theatres at acceptable length without severe truncation.

Bill Kelley



FLESH GORDON II



Howard Ziehm, hard at work.

In 1935, the earth faces a grave peril: its youth is being corrupted by rock-and-roll, beamed from the planet Obismos? That's history according to Howard Ziehm, who is merrily launching another sex-adventure-comedy epic, **THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF FLESH GORDON**.

In some ways, Ziehm recalls the entrepreneurs of early Hollywood. He left science studies at MIT ("I didn't like where I was going, which was a little, tedious room working out somebody's atomic bomb problem"), tried other things, and eventually found happiness in the porno film business. With partner Bill Osco, Ziehm produced early porn features like **MONA** and **HOLLYWOOD BLUE**.

The first **FLESH GORDON** (1974) began as a \$25,000 quickie intended solely for the X-rated market. But it began to grow (albeit uncontrollably, and with considerable budget pains) into a feature-length fantasy eventually released with an R-rating. Of that film, Ziehm now says, "Everything was sort of an afterthought. . ." This time he has his sights set on a more organized production. He has a complete script (co-authored with Carol Chassen) designed to capitalize on the elements more-or-less stumbled over in the production of **FLESH GORDON**: "We've spent a lot more time developing the comedy aspects of this picture." Ziehm has also prepared a pre-production package which includes a portfolio of impressive paintings by David B. Mattingly (now a matte artist working on Disney's **THE BLACK HOLE**). The new **FLESH GORDON** feature will be deliberately rated R (the first was re-cut to qualify for its "R") in order to reach for a larger audience, and to avoid the advertising bans some newspapers impose on X-rated films.

The script for **THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF FLESH GORDON** is, to say the least, brimming with action. Basically, archvillain Captain God is out to conquer earth with his long-range rock-and-roll. Fortunately, he makes the mistake of kidnapping **Flesh Gordon's** girlfriend, Dale Ardor, and that brings **Flesh** and Dr. **Flexi Jerkoff** in hot pursuit, traveling, of course, in another one of Jerkoff's homemade spaceships—this one being breast-shaped and powered by the energy from aroused chickens. (**FLESH** fans may remember Jerkoff's first

by S. S. Wilson

Stylish preproduction artwork from THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF FLESH GORDON, painted by David B. Mattingly. On this page: 1) Flesh and Dr. Flexi Jerkoff, caught at meal-time in the web of the giant spider, Dominatrix. 2) Queen Frigid's elegant flying ship, over the tundra of the planet Obismos. 3) A closeup view of Captain God's stronghold, the radio-castle. 4) Flesh in the clutches of the tentacle "meat grinder." Back Cover: Top: Flesh, horror-stricken, looks on as Dale Ardor is subjected to the Personality Machine. Bottom: In escaping Captain God, Dale, Flesh and Jerkoff are shaken off the Tuning Fork bridge.

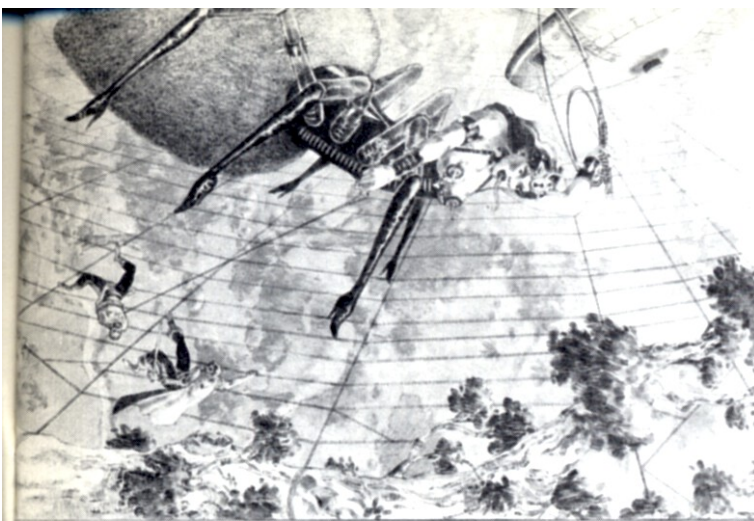
ship, which operated and sounded like, a San Francisco cable car).

Once on the planet Obismos, **Flesh** and **Jerkoff** are nearly eaten alive by a giant spider, but are whisked away from certain death by a patrol of Captain **God's** army. They are placed in the care of mad scientist **Boris**, Captain **God's** closest aide, whose dungeons are filled with humanoid freaks he created. There **Flesh** discovers **Dale Ardor**, her intelligence regressed by **Boris' Personality Machine**. Through a series of outlandish escapes and adventures, **Flesh** slips out of **Boris' clutches**.

Eventually, **Flesh** enlists the giant **Queen Frigid** for an all-out battle with **Captain God**, but not before **Flesh** and his pals have negotiated the farting **Assteroids**, climbed the **Mammary Mountains**, become human pinballs, endured ghoulish experiments; have met the robot **King Schlong**, a gay **Frankenstein monster**, the **Baby People**, pig motorcyclists, and assorted monsters. If even half of this madness actually reaches the screen, **THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF FLESH GORDON** should be a unique showcase for special effects and animation.

In spite of the original **FLESH GORDON's** monetary success, Ziehm has met some resistance in financing the outrageous sequel. He says, "A lot of investors coming into the movie business have this dream: 'Now I'm gonna be with **Marlon Brando**.' You run into it all the time." But Ziehm is forging ahead with confidence, reportedly even turning down occasional offers of "legitimate" film work. "A couple of times I've been approached on getting involved in the studio thing, and I'd just rather run a flower shop or something. I have fun doing this—I like the freedom of making a crazy little offbeat picture like this, and saying what I want to say."

Ziehm is currently considering an offer from AIP to back the feature to the tune of \$1.5 million, only half the amount Ziehm was pitching for, needed to turn **David B. Mattingly's** fantastic preproduction artwork into screen reality. Watch out, **Russ Meyer!** □



THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES



Ray Bradbury

Originally slotted for broadcast September 17, 18 and 19 over NBC-TV, the six-hour mini-series adaptation of Ray Bradbury's *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* has now been rescheduled by the network. Industry reports have implied that the massive science fiction epic was shuffled out of NBC's opening lineup because "stronger" material was needed to debut the season. Producer Charles Fries contradicts this rumor, explaining, "We're still tied up with the special effects for the show. That's what is taking so long. No one from the network has seen anything from it yet because we haven't been able to deliver a final print. But NBC came up with these crazy announcements that they were keeping it in their firm schedule, which would have meant advance screenings for it, and that would have been impossible." *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* is tentatively scheduled for early January, although Fries might have it ready for telecast before then. "I'm happy with it," says Fries. "It's progressing nicely."

In late July, Fries' primary concern was with *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES*' technical wizardry: "Once we had finished the principal shooting back in November, we had only the basic matrix.

by Bill Kelley
and David Bianculli

Isaac Asimov Writes BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

Science fiction author Isaac Asimov has been quoted that he never writes TV or movie scripts. Yet, some recent news from Universal is that Asimov had written a script for *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA*. "I have not written a script for them," says Asimov. "What I have done is write a treatment for the show, which someone else will convert into a screenplay." Although *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA* has been cancelled by ABC-TV, there is a good chance it will return next season in special, two-hour installments popping up throughout the year. And if Universal goes ahead with Asimov's treatment? "They will have a show," claims Asimov, "that will be two full body-lengths above what they have done thus far." *Peter Perakos*

And you have to go on from there. There are only two places in the world where you can make this kind of film—and that's Hollywood and England. The key people in Hollywood were tied-up—John Dykstra was exclusive to Universal and Doug Trumbull exclusive to Paramount. So we had to move forward within the confines of a TV budget and limited personnel. It's difficult if your home base is L.A.—I had a lot of traveling to do."

The show had already become a target of controversy in early summer, when author Ray Bradbury trashed the small-screen adaption of his most famous book. But producer Fries explained it away as a "misunderstanding." The fur began to fly in mid-June, at a network press junket in Los Angeles, during which Bradbury sharply criticized portions of the mini-series before a segment of the country's television critics. A few weeks later, a request placed with NBC for an interview with Fries elicited the response (from a network flack in New York), "Oh, is Bradbury shooting his mouth off again?"

Truth to tell, Bradbury has been decidedly close-mouthed about *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* since the June press conference. Yet he has acknowledged that he's unhappy with much of the project—in spirit as well as in execution. He was enthusiastic about the script supplied by science fiction author Richard Matheson, but the input of director Michael (LOGAN'S RUN) Anderson has left him cold.

"Well, Mike's done a number of films," said Bradbury. "He did *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS*. But he's just what you'd call a workmanlike director. He has no imagination. No flair. The poetry is gone from it. But I really don't think I ought to say more."

Contacted after the Bradbury interview, producer Fries expressed mild dismay over Bradbury's comments. He restricted the author's dissatisfaction to one incident which took place during filming.

"Essentially," said Fries, "I think Ray is very positive about this production. He said its last four hours were very entertaining. The only

problem arose when Ray wanted a scene in which one of the characters sings "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes," which was in one of the original stories, and was in the script and everything, but we just felt it did not work, and we cut it out. Ray was unhappy about that; he felt it was important to leave in."

"But from our point of view," Fries continued, "I think Ray is very happy with the show. He saw the dailies, he saw the first cut, he was there. We've made a tremendous number of mini-series' (*THE WORD, HOUSE ON GARIBALDI STREET*), and none of the authors we've adapted ever had consultation rights. We just felt it was important in Ray's case."

Published in 1950, *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* is a collection of closely related stories tracing the colonization of Mars by Earthmen. The mini-series, which completed principal shooting in November 1978, was shot on location in Malta, the Canary Islands, and at Lee International Studios in London, produced by Fries in association with Dick Berg's Stonehenge Productions. The globetrotting nature of the production clearly made an experienced director a must. But Michael Anderson? The logical question to ask Fries was whether he'd seen *LOGAN'S RUN*, and if so, how could he possibly want Anderson to direct. "Yes, I saw it, and I know what you mean," said Fries. "But I don't think the failure of *LOGAN'S RUN* could be blamed on the director. There were other things responsible for that." As to the choice for script-writer, "Matheson was the logical one. His work speaks for itself."

This mini-series is broken into three parts (one per night): "The Expeditions," "The Settlers," and "The Martians." It begins in the year 2000, with Col. John Wilder (Rock Hudson) leading the colonization of Mars. "Basically, we chose stories that would work for us dramatically," Fries explained. "We did not use the one in which the people in the luggage shop buy it out and go to Earth... and we definitely didn't use the one with the black people and their expedi-

tion! And we end the piece the way the book ends, with the billion-year picnic." Fries said he and Malcolm Stuart, executive in charge of production (and former agent of Bradbury's) had wanted to do *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* several years ago as a theatrical feature, but it became more feasible to develop it as a television special. Preproduction began over two years ago, and Fries claimed that with studio overhead, postproduction and special effects, the mini-series ended up costing \$8½ to 9 million.

So Fries is somewhat anxious. NBC has scheduled two major science fiction adaptations for the upcoming season: *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* and Aldous Huxley's *BRAVE NEW WORLD*. It appears, after viewing four hours-worth of the latter, and 35 minutes of the former, that *BRAVE NEW WORLD* gets a much fairer shake.

The problems with *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* come not from the script, but from the unimaginative set design and rather indifferent casting. Placing Hudson in the lead role is a flat-out mistake, as if Commissioner MacMillan had suddenly found himself on Mars. The landscapes look more like locations in the Southwest than "location shooting" on another planet, despite the oddly-colored sky. The miniature work, particularly when cafe owner Darren McGavin takes reins in hand and leads a bizarre caravan across the Martian plain, is about as convincing as the archaic miniatures in *BARBARELLA*. Perhaps postproduction finagling will reverse some of the problems before *THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES* is broadcast. Some smaller details, like the Martian weapons that look like sawed-off silver umbrellas, are irreversible. Gayle Hunnicutt, Bernie Casey, Roddy McDowall and Bernadette Peters also star. □

DeLaurentiis' *FLASH GORDON* "Shakespeare it's not..."

DeLaurentiis' FLASH GORDON "Shakespeare it's not..."

After more than sixteen months of preproduction, *FLASH GORDON* went before the cameras August 6 for producer Dino DeLaurentiis, starring unknown Sam J. Jones in the title role. Directing is Mike Hodges (*THE TERMINAL MAN*), who replaced Nicholas Roeg after he bowed out of the project when production dragged on. Instrumental in Roeg's departure was DeLaurentiis' dissatisfaction with Roeg's attempts to "make Shakespeare out of a comic strip." The script, by Lorenzo Semple Jr. (*KING KONG, BATMAN*), replaces a less-hokey Michael Allin scenario. Max Von Sydow and Topol also star. Physical effects are being handled by Glen Robinson, miniature work by Martin (ALIEN) Bower, and opticals by Frank Van Der Veer.

ALTERED STATES Dick Smith Makeup Effects

Oscar-winning makeup artist Dick Smith is putting finishing touches on his elaborate makeup designs for *ALTERED STATES* [see 8:2:85]. Smith, with artists Craig Reardon and Rick Baker, has sculpted and cast nine special effects makeup suits, for the husband and wife characters who alter physically under the influence of an unknown hallucinogen. The suits undulate and collapse by the use of pneumatics and complex mechanics. 16mm makeup test footage shot by Dick Smith's son David, is impressive indeed (Dave Smith will be handling makeup chores on Orion's *THE WOLFEN*). Rick Baker has created a prosthetic mask for a scene of a character turning into a primeval man. The early 'trip' sequence will be 2001-type opticals.

Jim Danforth's TIMEGATE Studio Shutters

Jim Danforth's production headquarters for *TIMEGATE*, located in Glendale, California, shuttered August 1. Danforth and his financial backers had been picking up the rent tab since June [see 8:4:9] in the hopes of resuming the ill-fated production. Although equipment owned by Mel Simon was removed for storage, many of the film's costly props were simply thrown away, and were made available for the taking as the landlord stripped the building to its bare walls. A craftsman who worked on *TIMEGATE* boasted of claiming one of the film's laser rifles. Danforth is currently planning another dinosaur picture, a comedy, and is seeking work on Burrough's *JOHN CARTER OF MARS*, in the early stages of negotiations with ERB Inc. at Columbia.

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



In Germany, it's *THE EMPIRE STRIKES AGAIN*; in France, Spain, Belgium and Switzerland it's *THE EMPIRE COUNTER-ATTACKS*; in Sweden it's *THE SPACE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*; and in the United States and England, *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. By any title, it's the sequel to George Lucas' *STAR WARS*, due for Twentieth Century-Fox release next summer, with a budget of \$18 million—roughly two times that of the original film.

EMPIRE opens on the frozen planet of Hoth, an eerie world in the grip of its ice age, now the distant hiding place of Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher), Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and Hans Solo (Harrison Ford), who are still pursued by Darth Vader (David Prowse)—more determined than ever to crush Leia's rebel alliance. Eventually, Vader's forces attack Hoth, just as the rebels escape. Luke, accompanied by Artoo Detoo (Kenny Baker) journeys to a steaming jungle planet, prowls through its swamps and locates the Jedi master who taught the ways of The Force to both his father and Ben Kenobi.

Hans, Leia, See Threepio (Anthony Daniels) and Chewbacca (Peter Mayhew) overcome the odds against them and escape in Solo's ship, the *Millennium Falcon*, which carries them through space to the crater of an asteroid, a temporary shelter. Eluding Vader's forces for a time, they finally set down on Bestin, a gaseous planet where Hans turns to an old comrade, Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams). But in addition to the threat of discovery by Vader's troops, there is on Bestin the ominous presence of bounty hunters, eager to claim the price on Hans Solo's head.

The film concludes with Luke, who alone senses the doom that grows nearer to his comrades, organizing a last-minute confrontation with Vader and the bounty hunters: a big light sabre duel, but more exciting, more athletic and longer than the one in the first film.

Producer George Lucas' original story was adapted into an intricate screenplay by science fantasy writer Leigh Brackett (whose screen credits include *THE BIG SLEEP*, and who was the widow of science fiction author Edmund Hamilton), but she died in 1978, after completing only a first draft. Fox announced that "a young, new talent," Larry Kasdan, "revised and completed the screenplay." We can only hope that not too much "revising" was done to the script of a highly respected screenwriter such as Leigh Brackett.

The huge budget implies what it seems to: bigger sets and more adventurous location shooting. The first *STAR WARS* was shot partially in the Tunisian desert; the sequel was shot partially in the even more unmanageable frozen wastelands of Norway, specifically a glacier four thousand feet above sea level, where the temperature dropped to forty below. Equipment was ship-

ped from England to the Norwegian port city of Bergen, and then to the barely accessible location for shooting. The Norway filming began March 5. The production had intended to stay a week, but remained only five days due to the oppressive cold.

One cast member not present for the Norway shooting was Anthony Daniels, the 33 year-old British actor who plays See Threepio, Luke Skywalker's robot sidekick. "The costume just would not have functioned in that cold," explained Daniels, days after shooting ended. "The gold suit was improved generally over the first film—made with lighter material." On *STAR WARS*, Daniels had to rely on small holes in the suit to provide ventilation. For all the added comfort now given Daniels in the sequel, the robot character still looks exactly the same.

Science fiction buffs hoping for a serious fantasy film come May, when *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* is released, will have to look elsewhere. Daniels reports the change in directors from George Lucas on *STAR WARS*, to Irvin Kershner on the sequel, will not alter the movie's semi-comic thrust. "They maintain that balance," says Daniels. "If anything gets too serious, we cut to comedy. There is, however, a light sabre confrontation at the end which is very terrifying—intentionally so. The difference between George Lucas and Kershner is that George is very shy—'Kersh' is not. He's very demonstrative, very firm, and he's an actor's director."

David Prowse, who completed his last bits of 'pick-up' shooting in London on August 3, agreed that there is a vast difference between the Lucas and Kershner style of directing. "He's got his own ideas," Prowse said of Kershner, "but he's inherited a story and characters that already exist. He's limited in what he can do, but he'll come up to you and say, 'let's see what can be done with this scene.' He'd add his own personality. Kershner shot very slowly. And the film was miles behind schedule. They guaranteed me ten weeks and I got nineteen. They still have one final scene to do in August, on what we call the 'bog planet,' a swamp planet. That set is being built right now, and the scene involves only Mark [Hamill]." □

Luke Skywalker rides a Taun-Taun.



by Bill Kelley

MAKING

BEHIND THE SCENES

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<i>Alien Designer</i>		

CAST AND CREDITS

Producer, Gordon Carroll **Screenplay,** Dan O'Bannon **Story,** Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett **Executive Producer,** Ronald Shusett **Music,** Jerry Goldsmith, conducted by Lionel Newman **Film Editor,** Terry Rawling **Director of Photography,** Derek Vanlint **Art directors,** Les Dilley and Roger Christian **Special effects supervisors,** Brian Johnson and Nick Alder **Visual design consultant,** Dan O'Bannon **Concept artist,** Ron Cobb **Production manager,** Garth Thomas **Construction manager,** Bill Welch **Floor effects supervisor,** Allan Bryce **Special effects technicians,** David Watkins, Phil Knowles, Roger Nichols, Dennis Lowe, Neil Swan, Guy Hudson **Title design,** Frankfurt Communications **R. Greenberg Associates/Tony Silver Films** **Editor,** Peter Weatherley **Sound editor,** Jim Shields, G.B.F.E. **Dialogue editor,** Bryan Tilling **Music editor,** Bob Hathaway **First assistant editor,** Les Healey **Assistant film editors,** Peter Culverwell, Bridget Reiss, Peter Baldock, Maureen Lyndon **First assistant director,** Paul Ibbotson **Assistant directors,** Raymond Becket, Steve Harding **Production assistant,** Valerie Craig **Continuity,** Kay Fenton **Assistant to producers,** Alice Harmon, Lori Covel **Assistant to director,** Sandy Mollov **Trainee assistant director,** Bob Jordan **Production executive,** Mark Haggard **Costume design,** John Mollo **Wardrobe supervisor,** Tinsy Nicholls **Makeup supervisor,** Tommie Manderson **Makeup,** Pat Hay **Set decorator,** Ian Whittaker **Assistant art directors,** Jonathan Amberston, Benjamin Fernandez **Property master,** Dave Jordan **Production buyer,** Jill Querner **Concept artists,** Jean "Moebius" Giraud, Chris Foss **Head carpenter,** George Gunning **Head plasterers,** Bert Rodwell **Head painter,** John Davey **Additional alien mechanics,** Carlo DeMarchis, Dr. David Watling **Alien effects coordinator,** Clinton Cavets **Matter artist,** Ray Caple **Supervising modeller,** Peter Boysev **Modellers,** Eddie Butler, Shirley Denny, Pat Rodgers **Main Unit: Camera Focus,** Adrian Biddle, Colin Davidson; **Key Grip,** Jimmy Walters; **Lighting Gaffer,** Ray Evans **Electronics and video coordinator,** Dick Hewitt **Miniature Effects: Director of photography,** Denis Ayling **Operator,** David Litchfield **Focus,** Terry Pearce **Supervising model-makers,** Martin Bower, Bill Pearson **Special optical effects,** Filmflex **Special graphic effects titles,** Bernard Lodge **Stunt coordinator,** Roy Scammel **Stunt work,** Eddie Powell **Voice of "Mother,"** Helen Horton **"Jones" trained by Animals Unlimited.** **Incidental music from *Symphonia No. 2: "Romantic"*, by Howard Hanson, and from *Eme Kleine Nachtmusik*, by W. A. Mozart. **Production statistics:** Filmed in Panavision, released in 70mm. Color by Eastman Kodak Prints by DeLuxe. Processing by Rank Film Laboratories. In Dolby stereo. Made at Shepperton Studios. Released by Twentieth Century Fox. 5/25/79. 124 minutes. **CAST:** Dallas (Tom Skerritt), Ripley (Sigourney Weaver), Lambert (Vernonica Cartwright), Brett (Harry Dean Stanton), Kane (John Hurt), Ash (Ian Holm), Parker (Yaphet Kotto).**

RIDLEY SCOTT Director

"As soon as you accept a script like this, you begin to worry about what you're going to do with the 'man in the rubber suit.'"

With only two feature-length films to his credit, Ridley Scott, 39, is being hailed the master of visual stimulation. Before he made the transition to movies (with 1976's *THE DUELLISTS*), the British director headed Ridley Scott Associates, a London-based firm that churned out some 3000 television commercials, many of which were prize-winners and, he boasts, "would still bowl you over." He now credits his ten-year apprenticeship in the advertising field for teaching him how, in the least amount of time, to mold and direct viewer response. *ALIEN*, which he likens to "a nail being hammered into your head," is the result of this early training. "It employs the ultimate science of viewer manipulation—a lot of the psychological elements I learned in advertising, specifically in the editing and lighting of 30-to-45-second spots."

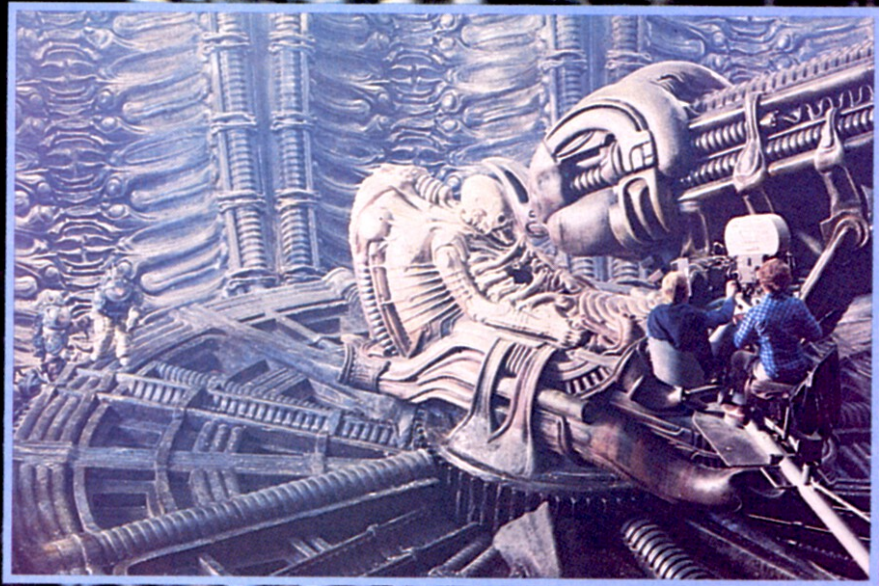
As did suspense/horror specialists as far removed as Alfred Hitchcock and Jack Arnold, Scott came to film following a formal education in art. It was while at the Royal College of Art that he first discovered a natural aptitude for the medium. His first film, financed for 100 British pounds, was a 16mm short titled *BOY ON A BICYCLE*. Foreshadowing his present fascination with

macabre "chance" meetings that more often than not terminate in senseless violence, it dealt with a boy playing hooky from school and meeting a madman. Scott's younger brother played the truant youth; Scott's father the crazed stranger. The British Film Institute was so impressed that Scott was awarded a grant to expand and elaborate on the short. A job as set designer with BBC-TV followed shortly thereafter; a half-hour, 16mm version of *PATHS OF GLORY*, something completed as part of a BBC production course, netted him two episodes directing a series called *Z-CARS*, followed by working on the top-rated *INFORMER* series. After three years in television production, Scott (with the aid of his brother) struck out on his own in the more lucrative TV commercial business. Of the several hundred ads he personally supervised, he is proudest of those for Levi jeans, Hovis Bread and Strongbow Cider. The Hovis Bread spot, set in an old-time bakery and featuring sophisticated back lighting and eerie mist effects soon to become Scott's trademark, is considered something of a classic in advertising circles. An offer from French television to direct an hour-long drama led to *THE DUELLISTS*, and a new phase in Scott's career. Now, with a second feature under his belt, Scott vows he'll never return to ad work.

Refreshingly unpretentious, Scott is perfectly happy hearing *ALIEN* referred to as a "\$10 million B-movie." He intended it to be a "vicious shocker"—an unrelenting experiment in pure terror which borrows brazenly from the technical innovations of Kubrick's 2001: *A SPACE ODYSSEY* and, to an even greater extent, George Lucas' *STAR WARS*. Unlike these models, though, he agrees there is nothing enigmatic or benign about *ALIEN*; it is a dry scream of a shocker aiming to intimidate, manipulate... and frighten.

Turn page for interview

Right: H. R. Giger in the Alien Hatchery, watching his own designs come alive in three dimensions on a Shepperton soundstage. Inset: Director Ridley Scott and cinematographer Derek Vanlint crane in for a shot on Giger's fantastic set of the derelict starship, as Kane (left) climbs up over the edge to see it for the first time.



How did you become involved in ALIEN?

Almost three years ago, I was shown the reworked Dan O'Bannon script. At the time I was at a standstill with TRISTAN AND ISEULT, an Arthurian tale about knights and sorcery. So I was looking for something. I was immediately attracted to ALIEN for the same reasons I was attracted to Joseph Conrad's novella, *The Duellists*. It was so simple, so linear, absolutely pure, an idea with no fat. The script was short and very specific—and unbelievably violent. It took me less than 45 minutes to read. That really impressed me. I sensed that it would play even faster than it read.

What little science fiction I'd seen had been too similar. 2001 was my personal revelation, and I began to speculate on what else could be done in space. Then came STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, and I realized the tremendous quality that was possible in making these films stand head and shoulders above the usual quickie space flick or horror movie. I saw something new in ALIEN. I was attracted to the theory of over-powering industrial influence, the conglomerate mass control, the Big Brother syndrome. Most of all, though, it was the thrilling aspect of the unseen, inescapable force of evil.

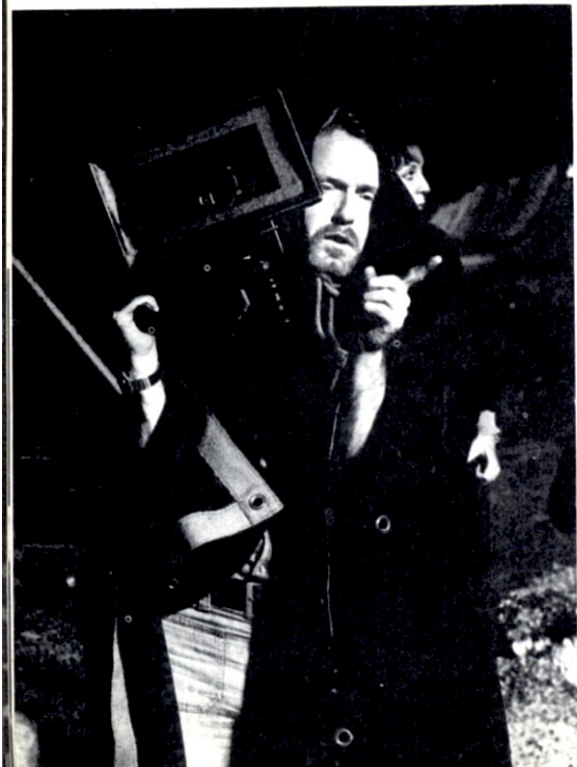
Were you aware, going in, of the similarities between O'Bannon's script and Edward Cahn's IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE?

Someone brought up that title about halfway through production. That title and others. But I'd never seen the film you refer to, and was not aware of it. So, no, I was not aware of any similarities.

Once committed to the script, how did you proceed?

In the few horror films I've seen, with the exception of maybe one or two, the creatures haven't been terribly good. As soon as you accept a script like this, you begin to worry about what you're going to do with "the man in the rubber suit." So the alien became our

Director Ridley Scott, caped and hooded, prepares to film a hand-held take on the set of the storm-ridden planet.



first priority. We had to make it totally repulsive and yet scary as hell. I looked at sketches of blobs and octopuses and dinosaurs. They were all awful. We could have gone on that way for months. Just as I was ready to throw in the towel, Shusett and O'Bannon showed me H. R. Giger's *Necronomicon*, the book by the Swiss surrealist. On the bottom half of page 65 I found a painting of a demon with a jutting face and long, extended, phallic-shaped head. It was the most frightening thing I'd ever seen. I knew immediately that here was our creature. That 1976 painting [*Necronom IV*] was the basis for the monster.

And the cluttered look of the craft itself—the empty beer cans, nude pinups, wind chimes, etc.—whose idea was that?

The environment took shape almost by itself. If you look at some of my early commercials, you'll realize I've always concerned myself with what seem to be extraneous things, tactile things. My obsession for detail angered a lot of people on the set—I wanted the lighting and props just so. But in the end, I think these small touches make an enormous difference.

Like the dunking toy birds. . .

Yes, like the incongruity of these people things, the paradox of plastic toys existing in the same ship with all-out terror. I was going to cut to the birds more often—for macabre humor, if you will—but I backed off because it seemed too pretentious. The cat, Jones, he was a pure red herring.

Could you elaborate on the scenes you edited out?

With horror films I've always believed less is more. Our rough cut was just too intense. So we cut out 11 minutes, including the episode in which Ripley finds Dallas, alive and begging to be killed, in the creature's cocoon. Originally, there was a stronger degree of terror. Just subtle things, half-seen, half-heard things earlier in the picture. Consequently, you have the audience holding on from the beginning. That's no good. There's no break in the tension, as Hitchcock provides in *PSYCHO*. If it ran as we shot it, it would have created an almost nauseous feeling in the viewer. So we backed off. I happen to be a great admirer of Tobe Hooper's *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*. That film was absolutely, utterly relentless—a real heart-stopper. But Hooper overdid it. If he had just eased back a bit, if he had let you off the hook a couple of times, he could have captured a much broader audience.

And as with Hooper's film, repeat viewings of ALIEN prove that much more is suggested than you first thought.

The "chest-birth" is by far the most gruesome scene. The fights with the alien were staged like formal duels. Their stance—the crewmembers'—is almost eloquent and they wield weapons—the flamethrowers—like swords. I envisioned the final encounter, however, like a fight between alley cats.

Did you tone down the sex?

We did shoot one semi-romantic scene between Sigourney Weaver and Tom Skerritt. Their antagonism early in the story leads one to think (or hope) they'll wind up loving each other. But that's not the purpose of the film. Ripley suggests to Dallas that she'd like a "release," but that's as close as we got to explaining sex in space. The scene was out as un-

necessary. The viewer may assume that on a spaceship it's a question of "sex for all" or else it's bromides. One thing's sure, melancholia is the end effect of space travel. Ripley does a modest strip once in the shuttle, but we kept that in to stress the vulnerability of a lady who's pretty much a ballsy sort.

In almost all science fiction/monster movies, from THE THING to IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE, man attempts to communicate with the alien life form, despite obvious dangers to himself. It's almost a "given" in the genre. Did you consider a variation on this traditional confrontation/meeting between science and the deadly unknown?

No. We consciously avoided those conventional areas. If they stopped to talk to the thing, it would have detracted from the thriller elements. So we consciously steered clear of the meeting you're talking about. Remember, the crew is too busy surviving to think of reasoning with it. It becomes clear, I think, early on, that it was not designed to talk or reason—only to kill.

Were you trying to "say anything" in your handling of the film?

After what happened to *THE DUELLISTS*, I'd rather not help critics read things into my films. *THE DUELLISTS* was not an "art" film, but it was shown exclusively at "art houses." I'd much rather have seen it as a B-feature on the same bill with a Clint Eastwood film. The same with my new film. There's nothing that's very intellectual about *ALIEN*. That's the point of the film. It has absolutely no message. It works on a very visceral level and its only point is terror, and more terror.

What frightens you?

Claustrophobia frightens me. I can't stand the thought of being restricted for a long period of time. Obviously, then, I related to the dilemma of the crewmembers of the *Nostromo*. Even worse than facing the alien is the thought of being in those cramped quarters for more than a year's time. You have to relate on a very personal level to what frightens you the most. I did that by consciously making their quarters even more cramped. I wanted Yaphet Kotto, who's a very tall man, to feel my discomfort, to duck every time he walked into a new compartment.

Will you do another science fiction film soon?

My next film will certainly not be science fiction. My next one will be totally different. I'll return to the *TRISTAN AND ISEULT* project. Only it'll probably be called *KNIGHT*. Again, the idea will be to steer clear of the trap of treating familiar themes conventionally. My knights will be treated irreverently—sort of like down-trodden cowboys rather than medieval heroes. After that one, I'll probably return to science fiction. I still have a lot of ideas in this area that I want to bring to the screen. I tried to squeeze many of them into *ALIEN*, even though I knew they were completely irrelevant. For instance, I wanted to use small sensor crafts to carry messages between the space-tug compartments. We were going to call them "mice." I came up with many ideas, but was slapped down because they were too elaborate, and would have upped the budget higher than Fox was willing to go. I'll pull them out later. The important thing now for me is to keep working. The trap is in not making enough films. Glenn Lovell

On the surface of things, Ridley Scott's second feature as a director seems to be exactly the sort of science fiction film that's stigmatized the genre for decades. One can already hear the collective, pained outcry of progressive purists everywhere, their feverish allegation that Scott "has set the genre back thirty years," etc., etc. Exhibit A? ALIEN has a monster in it (one hell of a monster in it, too); and in order to tell the story it tells and depict what it depicts, ALIEN violates and/or completely ignores many a known scientific reality. But if ALIEN must be counted a throwback, consider this: in being so it returns us to certain of the genre's most basic, elemental qualities. In this respect, the screenplay consciously tips its hand, opening as it does with a poetic, yet precise W. H. Auden epigram: "Science-fiction plucks from within us our deepest fears and hopes, then shows them to us in rough disguise: the monster and the rocket."

But ALIEN is out of balance, as long on forward momentum and shock as it is short on logic, depth of characterization or at times even clarity. Paradoxically, the film's strength, the Alien itself, is also its greatest weakness. The thing is too monstrous, too deadly, too awful. No amount of originality of plot, richness of character or faithful adherence to scientific fact can balance out its presence in the same movie. Whence comes the decision of filmmakers to concentrate their energies where they would do most good, on the simple power of the screenplay's conflict. ALIEN's triumph? We, the audience, are made to feel that we are next. Credit Ridley Scott for this.

What was the extent of your exposure to science fiction in literature and cinema prior to ALIEN?

It was minimal. I was never very involved with science fiction beyond knowing that someday, at some point, I wanted to make a film within that genre. ALIEN came right out of the blue, sent to me by Sandy Leiberson at 20th Century-Fox in London. He'd seen THE DUELLISTS.

Which draft did he send you? Dan O'Bannon's original?

I read the Walter Hill, Dan O'Bannon, David Giler, Ronald Shusett version. By this time it was very much a compilation.

How did O'Bannon originally interest producer Gordon Carroll in the material?

O'Bannon and Shusett had been pushing scripts around for a while. They'd submitted ALIEN to Fox, but it had been rejected.

When the script was still called STARBEAST?

I don't know. STARBEAST? Jesus! Well, somehow they got it to Gordon Carroll at Brandywine Productions, a company under Fox's "umbrella" in which he was partners with Hill and Giler. Brandywine was obliged to hand over things they were developing to Fox for first refusal. I think it was Walter Hill who read it and was quite taken with it. To begin with, he did an editing job on it. He polished it and presented it to Fox, who then seemed to find it a lot more interesting. Coming from Walter Hill, it had more muscle behind it and they took it very seriously. Then Hill and Giler really rewrote it, took things out, added things. They introduced, for instance, the element of women, five men and two women instead of seven men.

After reading it were you immediately excited



Ridley Scott (right) waits as his actors prepare for a take on the stormy planet set.

about directing it?

Yes, but I have to explain. I read it as soon as I received it because it came from Sandy Leiberson. There are certain people who, when they send you a script, you just know it's going to be of interest, be an intelligent shot at something. So ALIEN bypassed a whole pile of scripts I was reading. I read it very quickly and got back to him with my opinion that it was terrific and all of that. But at that point I couldn't do it because I was committed to something else. That something else fell through two months later, and I called him back and asked if ALIEN was still available. He said yes and two days later I was in L.A.

Was there a key image or scene in the screenplay that hooked you?

It was all of them. They were outrageous; absolutely outrageous. I mean outrageous right off the page, which very seldom happens. Hill writes a screenplay in a very communicative way. The image just comes bang at you and you understand absolutely what is going on. There's a very linear quality to the way he writes. I got a great sense of the drive, the power of the script. And that's unusual.

Was further work done on the script after you committed?

Obviously one has to make changes. One begins with the best of intentions, saying to a writer, "Look, this doesn't need changing at all, it's wonderful." But reading a screenplay with a view towards directing it is very different from merely reading it.

Is it true you were still involved in effects shooting until very recently?

Yes. The entire picture was a killer to make, physically. I've only really eased off in the last month or so. We were still refining various effects until two months ago.

Which scenes were these?

To do with the end of the movie. Though we had two units going at once, a live-action and an effects unit, the stuff we did in the beginning wasn't exactly what we wanted. Most special effects are a matter of doing a shot over and over in different ways. Gradually, through a process of elimination, you learn what not to do. The way to do the ending, where the ship's exhaust blasts the alien out

into space, came to me accidentally. I knew we would have to do this extraordinary ending, building shock upon shock, but I didn't know how the hell to actually depict it. We were filming the scene where the Harry Dean Stanton character, Brett, gets it. He walks into this room dominated by a huge piece of equipment, like a big foot. In fact it was one of the ship's landing legs, used in the planet exteriors. He's walking around and there's this rain, or condensation pouring down in there. I got some shots looking straight up at these four, very symmetrical round openings. They looked like jets or exhausts. And because the water was pouring down on us when we saw the rushes, it gave us a clue about how to do the ending. The water looked like plasma, because it was dropping in long, slow needles of light.

The way the alien just falls away from the ship, intact, one gets the feeling it may be indestructible.

I think it is indestructible. It just made a mistake, that's all. It was outraged.

Can you outline and talk about ALIEN's various production phases?

Preproduction was very fast. ALIEN was somewhat unorthodox in the way it got started. There was always a certain inevitability about it when I arrived in L.A. My presence, the director's presence, was the missing link. If you're around for months trying to develop something as a producer, it eventually gets very disheartening. You begin to wonder if it's ever going to happen. And I came in representing a stab of new enthusiasm, which was just what they needed at that point. We started to move towards a hypothetical start date. We hadn't even agreed on the budget yet. We had to have a very fast but accurate storyboarding of the script. It was very fast, but storyboarding is very helpful and I always do it anyway. We went with that board for budgeting and arrived at a figure of \$4.5 million, a totally speculative and I thought unrealistic budget. I took hold of it and it escalated to \$8 million. But we justified it with another board. By now we were casting and building sets and everything just funneled towards this frightening July 25 start date. At one point, we contemplated pushing it up a



Sigourney Weaver and Ridley Scott

couple of weeks to give ourselves a chance to get things more complete before we started.

This was in—

May. Altogether we had four months prep on ALIEN, which was crazy for something like this. That's working very quickly. But whipping along like that, with the adrenalin going and everybody working flat-out, it's quite good; there's a buzz to it all. We started shooting on July 25 and worked for sixteen weeks, which gave us all the main unit shooting with the floor effects. By floor effects I mean anything to do with the alien in its various forms, the various explosions within the ship, all of that. Special effects for the other stuff, the miniature work, were moving sort of slowly. At the end of that sixteen weeks, I moved into my editing period. This was in early November—I was editing while shooting effects with Nick Alder and his crew at Bray.

The effects shot of the alien falling away from the ship's exhausts, that was shot at Bray?

No. As a matter of fact, that was done on the floor of Shepperton, during main unit shooting. That was a wire job, the alien just hanging there with quartz iodine lights all around him, camera on the ground, shooting straight up. As I said, we used water for the exhaust effect, which sounded very illogical when we were discussing it. We couldn't have done it with fire—well, you could have, but it would have looked like fire. As soon as you use fire, you've got yellow. I wanted that whiteness. And you wouldn't have fire in space, would you?

I've several questions regarding the alien; both aliens. The first one seen sitting at that giant device inside the derelict spaceship; what is it exactly?

That one has nothing to do with the later alien, the main one. He was just one of the pilots of that vehicle. So if that was a ship with a crew, what happened to them was that they encountered this strange species when they accidentally landed on the planet. Maybe they had to land there for repairs. That crew was taken. The only one left managed to get to his seat and send out this warning signal. We might go into all this in the sequel.

Are you interested in directing a sequel?

Oh, sure. In many respects it'll be more interesting from a pure science fiction standpoint. We'd get into more speculative areas, deal with two different civilizations.

So the alien of the film's title was the dominant life form?

On that rock, yes. It may have waited thousands of years for some other form to come near. It's only trigger, you see, is another life form. Another biological presence enables it to move on and develop. It truly does have a kind of abstract purity. And, also, it's almost like a weapon; a product of biological, rather than bacteriological warfare. We never went into any of this but perhaps it was developed as a weapon and got out of control. Imagine a few thousand of those things.

In an early Walter Hill draft of the script, the character Ash was not a robot, but a human, just another crewmember. Mother had a voice like HAL 9000 in Kubrick's 2001. The parallels to Kubrick's film were quite marked.

It was logical to have a speaking computer—we have them right now as toys for kids. Our scientific advisor on this said all computers will someday speak, and they'll take any voice desired. Eventually there'll come a point where computers are replaced by something far more sophisticated, which is fairly staggering. He was talking about an intelligence explosion. This could make exploratory space travel outmoded. The computer will simply speculate, quite accurately, on what's out there. But to get back to the point. I think HAL 9000 was a brilliant idea. The parallels to SPACE ODYSSEY were just too close. So we broke Mother down into Ash.

Who did and when?

Hill and Giler, quite early. I liked the original idea and we wrestled around with it but we all decided it was too close. We'd in all honesty have had to include an end credit reading, "special thanks to Stanley Kubrick." Logically, one had to reject that. So Hill and Giler had Ash replace Mother, making her less important in that sense. She simply became the governing factor running the ship.

The alien's metamorphosis eventually moves it in the direction of humanoid form. Why?

The logic was this: if let's say, a dog had gone down into there, and the alien had smacked out on the dog, then it would have become dog-like. The human form was not only a host but a model. This doesn't happen on Earth. I think it's a biological impossibility.

But it has a nice symmetry. Did you know how you wanted the baby alien to look?

No, except that I knew he must resemble the big guy in some way or another. And people are quite stunned by the thing. One must give Roger Dicken credit for a marvelous job. Because we had to work backwards. I knew first what the largest, the final alien would look like. Someone said it reminded them of a dolphin.

The way a dolphin brings itself up to full height by flapping its tail in water.

When it drops onto Harry Dean Stanton it also looks like a dolphin. That's one of my favorite moments in the film, where that out-of-focus sort of member comes down and you know it's really strong, just incredibly powerful. That scene gives people an amazing feeling. That's when they know they're really in trouble. We were driving ourselves mad

over the look of the little guy. Not even Shusett and O'Bannon got to see it. We kept it under wraps because what can happen is that one gets too many suggestions and comments, a case of too many cooks. I would drive way out to Roger Dicken's house, which is far west of London. Dicken would not work in the studio, you see. I'd drive out every day to this gothic, Victorian house. Coincidentally, Dicken always wears black, the same as Giger. At first, Dicken had a tendency to go in the direction I resisted, a more classical notion of the monster, with warts and bumps and claws. But he had a marvelous technical expertise in model-making. Giger was along as well on these trips. Eventually he got more involved with the big guy because it was so difficult.

I think finally, when you want to be really scared, you've got to have a very private thought. You've got to think about what it is that physically makes you very uneasy, that upsets you in a primal way. And I'm not very easily upset. But we looked at various painters' works, and the one that caught us was by Francis Bacon, the three fleshy necks with jaws on the end. The primality, if there is such a word, was what interested me. The model itself, when it was finally made, was very odd and spooky. The jaws of it were metal and a cable system operated it. I had to look at the creature quite a lot because there were quite a lot of rushes. Nearly always those things look hokey and you've got to cut away quickly. But I wanted to and was able to sit and watch it.

How did you make it run past the camera?

It was purely mechanical, a rail system to get him off fast. In that instance I wanted it to move with great violence across the table, so that you got the impression that, though he was small, he was lethal.

How did you achieve the sound effect of its bark?

A mixture of three things, which we then distorted: a viper, a pig's squeal and a baby's cry.

I remember being positive it was going to strike out at one of the crew at that moment.

It didn't, you see, because it was bewildered. It was probably blind. All it could do was bite its way out of any difficulty. On the soundtrack, while Kane is having convulsions, you can hear it coming through. You can hear sinews and tissue ripping because he's biting through.

Were there discoveries, changes made in editing, or did ALIEN cut together as you'd pre-planned it?

There were no real surprises. I don't usually function like that. I'm very well covered. The cheapest element when you're making a film is celluloid, so it's madness not to be covered. Provided you are, cutting is usually fairly simple. Getting that real edge on a scene is difficult, however. And what it comes down to is just driving yourself and the editor around the bend, refining and re-editing and making various tiny changes.

Was deciding how long to hold on the alien at given points a problem for you?

What we wanted was to give an impression, although a very specific one. We always held onto him for as long as we could. When we would cut away, it was never out of embarrassment, but only because enough is enough—you didn't need to see more of it. Physically, he always stood up very well onscreen.

How was proper matching in lighting achieved for the miniatures?

I was around for most of the shooting of them, finally, because much of what we did in the beginning wasn't exactly what we wanted. There were no problems here. Nick Allder and his crew always saw our rushes. On balance, the miniature stuff is slightly grainier, because we wanted to keep away from the idea of clean surfaces in space; spacecraft will get dirty, burnt, corroded through various means.

What aspect of ALIEN took its greatest toll on you? You've already said that it was a difficult picture, physically.

Obsession with detail—detail in every area. You've got to have that. On a small unit, you're dealing with maybe sixty people. On a large unit, like ALIEN, you're dealing with a work force of something like 280. That means you're increasing your chances of failure simply because there are so many people. Whether it's the producer or the director, there has to be a central figure who is the anchor, the obsessive mainstay, someone to be the one to say, "No, that isn't it, we've got to go again." Because it's easier than one thinks to say, "Fuck it, let's go on." Do that too many times and you come to the end of your shooting schedule with a film made up of compromises. So the key thing is obsessiveness with quality, and, of course, just simple physical stamina. If you tire out, you won't be functioning well enough to keep the quality up. You'll wind up saying, "Fuck it, I'm going to bed," which, again, you just can't do.

Was it Dan O'Bannon who was pushing for you to use the music of a composer named Tomita? Specifically, Tomita's overwhelming rendition of Holst's "The Planets," the Mars, Bringer of War section?

Actually, I was. Tomita was first brought to my attention by editor, Terry Rawlings, who was my sound editor on THE DUELLISTS. He brought in "The Planets." It was so powerful, so outrageous. That music said all there was to say about what the alien was. Imagine many of them, a lot of them, having the capability of getting about. Christ almighty! I think Tomita's music evokes that. I was talked out of using it, finally, for various reasons, and went the more conventional genre route in film music. It's worked out quite well, though.

A final question regarding the screenplay. Did its lack of character development, enhancement, worry you?

That's always a danger. But some of the most successful films made are like that; Clint Eastwood's, for instance. In a film like ALIEN, one has, I think, to take care to present only so much information about the characters. I mean, as soon as you cast an actor, that actor brings a certain amount of "character" to that part. Harry Dean Stanton, as Brett, brings by his very presence intrinsic qualities to the character, qualities the audience can recognize. We tried to make the characters believable as people by what they do. For example, we've all done what Brett does when he goes off to look for the cat. I've done it. I've got a burglar alarm at home. It went off once and the first thing I did was run downstairs with a sort of walking stick. If anyone had been down there, I might have gotten my head blown off. The logical thing to have done would have been to wait upstairs until the police arrive. But we always, most of us, do the stupid thing; not the macho thing but the stupid thing.

Mark Patrick Carducci

WALTER HILL Producer

"We saw DARK STAR, which Dan O'Bannon seemed to take a lot of credit for, although he didn't direct it. He said he'd written it, done all the effects, and when the director wasn't looking, did most of the directing."

Tied inexorably to the production history of any motion picture is the authorship of its screenplay. In the case of ALIEN, Dan O'Bannon wrote an original screenplay with that title and many of the resulting motion picture's events and images. The final shooting script, however, contains substantial amounts of new material, added jointly by Walter Hill and David Giler, partners with Gordon Carroll in Brandywine Productions. In parcelling out the credits, 20th Century-Fox recommended to the Writer's Guild of America that Hill and Giler get screenplay credit, asking that O'Bannon be credited with "story by," only. Such a request automatically triggers an arbitration, per Writer's Guild rules, to decide the matter. Opines Walter Hill, "An arbitration is an unbelievably medieval process, in which a decision is rendered to which there is no appeal. The basic system, unfortunately, disenfranchises whoever writes the actual shooting script." The WGA judgment awarded sole screenplay credit to O'Bannon, a decision that erred in accuracy as equally as Fox's original request to give O'Bannon no credit for the screenplay at all. The fact is that three people are responsible for the script that Ridley Scott put before the cameras. But this is an old story, one certain

by Mark Patrick Carducci

of repetition until new rulings come down from the Guild regarding arbitration procedures.

Walter Hill has been on either side of an arbitration in his time. In the past, he has gone out of his way to cite his own limited contribution to produced screenplays (see **Movie #26**) that, due to the odd workings of the WGA, list him as the only writer. Hill has had a prolific career as a Hollywood screenwriter. His first screenplay was HICKEY AND BOGGS, starring Robert Culp and Bill Cosby. He wrote THE GETAWAY for director Sam Peckinpah, THE MACINTOSH MAN and THE DROWNING POOL for Paul Newman, and THE THIEF WHO CAME TO DINNER, which starred Ryan O'Neal and Jacqueline Bisset. Hill began directing his own scripts with HARD TIMES, followed by THE DRIVER and, most recently, THE WARRIORS, which he co-wrote with David Shaber. During our interview, Hill emphasized that he did not want to come off sounding either bitter or particularly resentful about the outcome of the Writer's Guild arbitration over ALIEN's screenplay credit. While disagreeing with the WGA decision, Hill takes a somewhat philosophical overview of the dispute, figuring that in the past he's won a few and lost a few. Hill did suggest something that has been taken up here, an examination of three separate drafts of ALIEN—O'Bannon's original, Hill's own first rewrite of the original, and the final shooting script by Hill and David Giler.

ALIEN is an example of a neophyte writing talent hitting upon a concept it is unprepared to develop fully. ALIEN's plotline, structure and especially the brilliantly nightmarish creature at its core, are all courtesy of the imagination (or memory) of Dan O'Bannon. It must be admitted that ALIEN would not exist as a movie, in any form, if O'Bannon had not put pen to paper. He was certainly the source. But if his draft had been lensed, ALIEN would have been far more juvenile and derivative than it is, without ever having realized its potential as a shocker. It's possible the property would have languished unproduced indefinitely, had Walter Hill not been excited by its prospects upon first reading it. Hill was, if anything, reluctant to fan the fires of controversy, but couldn't help

Ash (Ian Holm) as robot, a script idea developed by Walter Hill and David Giler.



"The O'Bannon-Shuset script was, in any kind of literary sense, remarkably unsophisticated. It had not even B-picture merit. That was its problem. Nobody could take it seriously. It wasn't a professional job. It was poorly written. It had a 'Jesus, gadzooks' quality and no real differentiation in characters."

recalling the early stages of his relationship with O'Bannon.

"We saw DARK STAR," said Hill, "which O'Bannon seemed to take a lot of credit for, although he didn't direct it. He said he'd written it, done all the effects and, when the director wasn't looking, did most of the directing. Now I've never been around a movie, good, bad or indifferent, that the director didn't direct! We allowed O'Bannon to be a part of the production over in London as a condition of taking on the screenplay. He constantly said he was interested in being the visual consultant, so we thought of some title to give him, some hoked-up thing because he wasn't a member of any of the guilds."

O'Bannon and his screenplay had been making the rounds for some time, and had been passed on repeatedly, when the thought of getting Walter Hill to take a look at it occurred to him. This was fairly inventive director-casting, considering the nature of ALIEN and Hill's reputed specialty, stylistically ritualized action-adversary drama. O'Bannon credits HARD TIMES, Hill's first feature as a writer-director, with making him think of Hill in the first place. A mutual friend named Mark Haggard passed it to Hill through the office window one hot afternoon as he was passing by Brandywine's offices. "The window story as reported in the Wall Street Journal is quite true," explained Hill. "The O'Bannon-[Ronald] Shuset script was, in any kind of literary sense, remarkably unsophisticated. It had not even B-picture merit.

Walter Hill



That was its problem. Nobody could take it seriously. It wasn't a professional job. It was poorly written. It had a 'Jesus, gadzooks' quality and no real differentiation in characters. But there was no question in my mind that they wanted to do a science fiction version of JAWS.

"It was put together with a lot of low cunning. To my mind, they had worked out a very interesting problem. How do you destroy a creature you can't kill without destroying your own life support system? I thought this a good notion. But the script had a lot of junk in it, like holograms and other current 'pop' stuff. In one story conference I recall O'Bannon wanted the ship to sail into a kind of Bermuda Triangle in space. There was this genuflect to Pyramidology; the alien eggs were in the bottom of a pyramid. O'Bannon and Shuset presented their draft to us and we asked O'Bannon not to write anymore, to stay away from pens and pencils altogether. He didn't seem to mind."

O'Bannon prefaces his draft with a variation on the epigram, a definition: "Alien, adj.—strange, foreign, distant, remote, hostile, repugnant. . ." His narrative, scene for scene, generally parallels the finished film, though there are crucial, major differences. Some of these might well be called "negative differences," in that they represent ideas, action and dialogue that was dropped. Example: the skull of the fossilized alien is brought onboard the ship (called the *Snark* in this draft), referred to as "Poor Yurick" during the film, and later winding up in the shuttlecraft with the surviving crewman. There is even a stilted bit of dialogue about the skull being "proof for the skeptics back home." Hill is quoted by O'Bannon [see 8:2:83] as once having said that one of his strengths in the project was that he knew nothing about science fiction. If so, Hill must have cut O'Bannon's material instinctively, sensing it was cliched without specific knowledge of the genre. We can perhaps be grateful to Hill and director Ridley Scott's lack of exposure to the science fiction field. Their ignorance somewhat camouflages ALIEN's derivations and balances O'Bannon's hard-core-fan's tendency towards the trap of unoriginality.

In the O'Bannon script, the crew is all-male, which in retrospect must seem a miscalculation even to him, considering his intent to produce something commercial. The dialogue is verbose, lacking strong, declarative sentences and therefore lacking rhythm and tension. His concepts for ALIEN are clearly an outgrowth of a lifetime exposure to the genre, both in film and literature. He borrows freely from classics and clinkers alike: FORBIDDEN PLANET, THE THING; FIEND WITHOUT A FACE and, of course, Jerome Bixby's low-budget gem IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE.

Even a casual reading of this draft yields a distinctly non-contemporary sensibility with regard to the characters, peopled with a conscious or unconscious synthesis of the archetypal 50's science fiction hero. The O'Bannon characters, Hunter, Standard, Roby, Faust, Melkonis and Broussard do indeed conjure up the "Jesus, gadzooks" quality that Walter Hill mentions.

The comradery is tense, artificial. There's a forced, take-charge, almost macho attitude

on the part of the highest-ranking officer. It barely worked for Leslie Nielsen and is completely unacceptable today. O'Bannon's essentially sterile, buttoned-down, duty-conscious "heroes" are, in plain terms, corny. The following excerpt from O'Bannon's script roasts an old chestnut: someone gets slapped and, in effect, says "I deserved that."

ROBY APPEARS IN THE DOORWAY

Standard turns and looks at him. For a long moment the two men regard each other, then STANDARD STEPS FORWARD AND SLAPS ROBY ACROSS THE FACE.

The others are shocked. . .

HUNTER
Hey now, what is this?

STANDARD
Ask him.

ROBY
(slowly puts his hand to his cheek)
I understand why you did that.

STANDARD
Good.

MELKONIS
He wouldn't open the lock; he was going to leave us out there.

HUNTER
Yeah. . .well, maybe he should have. I mean you brought the goddamn thing in here. Maybe you deserve to get slapped.

FAUST
Excuse me, I've got work to do.

FAUST EXITS.

HUNTER
I keep my mouth pretty much shut, but I don't like hitting.

ROBY
(to STANDARD)
I guess I had it coming. Let's call it settled.

After a hard stare at ROBY, STANDARD gives him a curt nod and turns his attention to the machinery.

The O'Bannon script has other flaws. Poor plotting sends the men out of the ship no less than three times, and needlessly complicates matters by including a huge pyramid in addition to the derelict spaceship. Hill's first draft expands the pyramid to an entire city, never fully explored. In subsequent rewrites with David Giler, he drops both the city and pyramid altogether, locating the 'eggs' in or beneath the derelict ship. This also limits the forays onto the planetoid surface to just one. O'Bannon's script suggests a dead, indiginous society through the discovery of "strange symbols" etched in the pyramid walls. This is intriguing but distracting, and was cut by Hill and Giler.

Later on in his draft, O'Bannon subjects us to several scenes almost obligatory to 50's science fiction. After returning to the ship, the men review holograms of what they've seen for the benefit of those who remained in the ship. It's a lazy solution to the screenwriter's problem of bringing characters not present during critical events up-to-date and it slows the script tremendously. In addition, it forces the audience to sit through something they're already witnessed. Hill and Giler's solution? Live television coverage of the planetoid's exploration.

If this early script can be said to have a single, major weakness, it is its lack of action, the deadly intrusions of the Alien aside. There are interminable exchanges about

“what should be done,” but very little happens. The script cries out for a subplot that would act as a catalyst when the Alien isn't onscreen. Hill injected one into his first rewrite, a speaking computer called Mother. This excerpt from an early Hill rewrite details Ripley's confrontation with Mother, written in Hill's unique staccato writing style, which director Ridley Scott claims got him excited about the project in the beginning.

INTERIOR—MOTHER'S CUBICLE

RIPLEY

Your not doing enough, Mother. Your job is to offer us choices, and you haven't offered us any.

MOTHER

You're not feeling well. We'd better get you into the autodoc for a little chemo-analysis.

Ripley takes out a large screwdriver. Begins bolting the plate in front of her.

RIPLEY

I've got doubts about who you're working for. When you doubt something, that's a problem. . . I've got enough problems.

Mother screams.

Snap.

Mother locks the compartment door from outside. Whoosh.

Shoots the oxygen supply into the computer room.

Ripley now in a vacuum.

Works the screwdriver furiously.

Pressure clamps falling away from the plate.

Her face swelling. Eyes bulging.

The plate comes off.

She crawls inside.

Row on row of circuitry.

Ripley starts down a long corridor.

Mother kills the lights.

Fires electrodes at her.

Ripley breaks into a run.

Still without oxygen.

Dodges and squirms through multi-colored tracer bullets.

Arrives at a series of raised crystals.

Each glass dome containing amber fluid.

She raises the screwdriver overhead.

Thrusts into the first crystal.

MOTHER

Oh. That doesn't feel good. You bitch.

Another thrust.

MOTHER

Oh. . . don't baby. Don't.

One more.

MOTHER

Oh. That's awful. You little cocksucker.

Amber fluid spilling out.

Ripley's face now purple.

One more crystal stabbed.

MOTHER

Oh. That's all. Please.

Audible snap from the outer door lock.

The hatch swings open.

Oxygen rushes back inside.

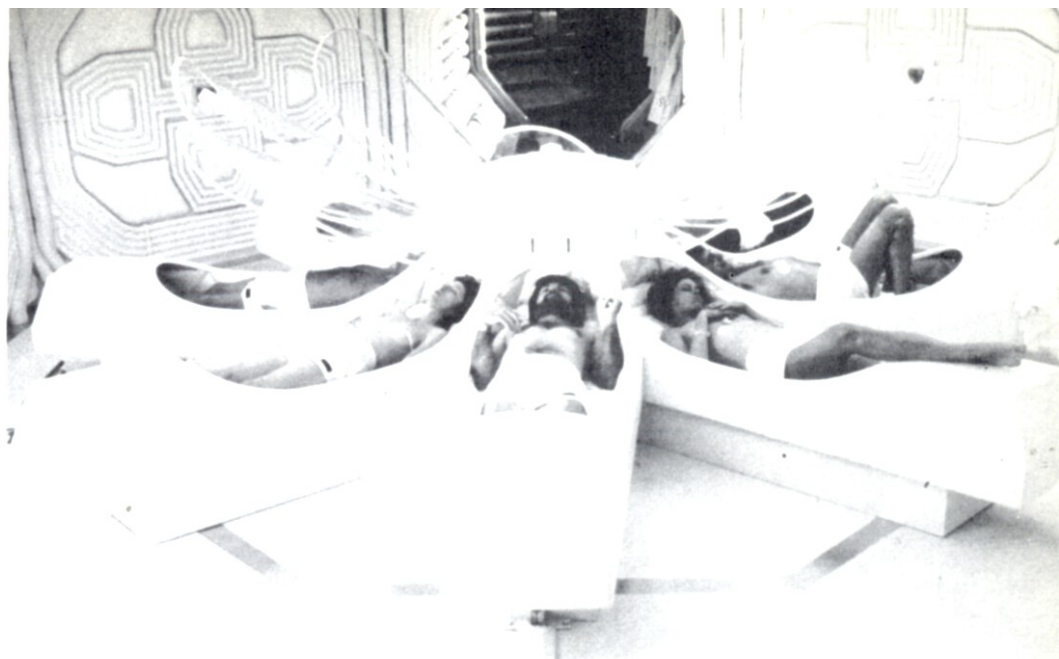
While O'Bannon's version also contains a speaking computer, its functions are limited to answering questions and, at the climax, announcing the imminent meltdown of the ship's nuclear reactor. Hill's first draft dialogue for Mother, just before Ripley “pulls her plug,” gives a clear picture of what he meant ALIEN to be about—the acting out of Darwin's theory of ‘survival of the fittest.’

INTERIOR—COMPUTER HOUSING

Ripley, lying on the deck, gasping for breath.

RIPLEY

Tell me why.



Veronica Cartwright, Tom Skerritt, and Sigourney Weaver in the sleep chamber. The Hill-Giler script added the element of women to the *Nostromo* crew, making them working class rather than military types.

MOTHER

It's complicated. The highest ideal of science is understanding Nature's laws. I have been taught to adopt this ideal in its purest form. We encountered an organism whose structural perfection is matched only by its hostility. . . my inclination was to observe and study rather than destroy.

RIPLEY

Enhance.

MOTHER

It was clear that the organism was responding to the laws of natural selection. The Alien had already competed with the civilization which inhabited that planet. . . now the pressure of natural selection has been transferred to you.

RIPLEY

I want some enhancement on your position.

MOTHER

What I have the honor of witnessing is one of those rare moments when a major evolutionary step is taken. Two highly successful species in immediate competition for resources and survival. In the interests of pure scientific research I removed myself from the struggle.

RIPLEY

You don't have the right. We built you. You're part of our survival equipment. You're supposed to be on our side.

She rises.

MOTHER

I am loyal only to discovering the truth. A scientific truth demands beauty, harmony and above all simplicity. The problem between you and the alien will produce a simple and elegant solution. Only one of you will survive.

This sense of being about something is exactly what the O'Bannon screenplay lacked. Though, to be fair, it had qualities the Hill-Giler drafts had to do without, in the interests of a different tone and an intensified narrative progression. But Hill and Giler decided that turning Mother into a speaking, dimensional character was too close to the concept of HAL 9000 in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. So they shifted the material written for Mother to Ash, the science officer, but kept the machine vs. human conflict by making Ash a robot.

The following, semi-poetic interlude from O'Bannon's script, a reuse of similar material from DARK STAR, was retained in

shorter form in Hill's first draft but dropped in the Hill-Giler version.

INT.—OBSERVATION DOME—VIEW OF OUTER SPACE

Melkonis is seated in the dome, upside down, peering down into space. Standard, upside-down, climbs into the dome. It is dark and eerie here, under the stars of interstellar space. A few glowing panels provide the only illumination.

STANDARD

I thought I'd find you here.

MELKONIS

I was thinking of a line from an old poem. “Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink.” All that space out there, and we're trapped in this ship.

STANDARD

That's the one about the albatross, right?

MELKONIS

We can't even radio for help. The carrier wave won't reach its destination till long after we've died and turned to dust. We are utterly, absolutely alone. Can anybody really visualize such a scale of distances? Halfway across creation. . .

STANDARD

We came out there, we'll go back. A long time by the clock but a short time to us.

MELKONIS

Time and space have no meaning out here. We are living in an Einsteinian equation.

STANDARD

Let me tell you something; you keep staring out at hyperspace for long enough, they'll be peeling you off a wall. I've seen it happen.

MELKONIS

(smiles at him)

We're the new pioneers, Chaz. We even have our own special diseases.

Hill's first crack at cleaning up the O'Bannon screenplay was done very quickly, in two or three days' time. It kept a great deal of O'Bannon's material, which would later be cut—Poor Yurick's skull, the Alien ransacking the ship's food lockers, an attempt to poison the creature with gas, and other “busy action.” A note of discord was added, by Hill, which had the characters not like each other very much, the side effect of which was that audiences later shared the same view. The descriptions of action and dialogue were

tightened, made terse, staccato. This style, Hill's preference, moved ALIEN forward on the page, a key factor in turning Fox around in their opinion of the script. Hill's draft of the chest-burster scene is lean and powerful.

INTERIOR—GALLEY

RIPLEY

What's wrong?

Dallas' voice strains.

DALLAS

I don't know. I'm getting cramps.

The others stare at him in alarm. Suddenly he makes a loud groaning noise, clutching the end of the table with his hands. Knuckles whitening.

HUNTER

What is it? What hurts?

Dallas' face screws into a mask of agony. He falls back into his chair.

DALLAS

Ohmygooooahhhh!

A red stain.
Then a smear of blood blossoms on his chest. The fabric of his tunic is ripped open. A small head the size of a man's fist pushes out. The tiny head lunges forward, comes spurting out of Dallas' chest trailing a thick body. Spatters fluids and blood in its wake. Lands in the middle of the dishes and food. Wiggles away while the crew scatters. Then the alien being disappears from sight. Dallas lies slumped in his chair. Very dead. A huge hole in his chest. The dishes are scattered. Food covered with blood.

FARADAY

What was that? What the Christ was that?

O'Bannon's dialogue was altered and in some scenes rewritten from scratch. It was not, as previously rumored, simply 'punched' through Hill's staccato format. Perhaps 60% of the O'Bannon draft was retained at this stage. The final Hill-Giler version would retain approximately 30%. The "Jesus, gadzooks" quality disappeared. Real people replaced O'Bannon's West Point cadets, right down to dealing with their sexuality—at one point Ripley and Dallas are seen post-coitus on a "pleasure bed." This Hill draft was presented to Fox, getting ALIEN launched as far as development money. A guarantee of production was still being mulled. Hill had committed to be ALIEN's director, but by the time Fox gave the green light, he'd committed to a western, the still unproduced THE LAST GUN. Hill was a bit relieved about not having to direct ALIEN.

"Even though I was intrigued by ALIEN," explained Hill, "I'd grown out of love with the idea of doing it. It was, maybe, a long way from the kind of thing I do. Maybe. I think Ridley did a wonderful job directing the movie. It's no secret that there were quite a few people contacted who didn't want to do it. Finally, Ridley came into the running and, very wisely, he saw its commercial potential. The irony of ALIEN was that it was at all times conceived as an enormously commercial project. What David and I constantly said was that if you do this right, you're going to make an awful lot of money. And those kinds of things almost never turn out to be commercial in the end. Once Fox believed we could make something of this comic book story, they supported it fully. But it took them awhile. It's difficult to get a studio to commit

to this kind of picture that typically has enormous cost over-runs. If you say ten million going in, they tend to think twenty million by the time you come out. Second, the picture was not going to have any well-known actors in it. And third, we wanted to go with Ridley, a director whose first film had been, despite its merits, totally non-commercial. That is a tough quinnella for a studio."

The first collaborative efforts of Hill and Giler took place at Hill's home in the Hollywood Hills in the fall of 1977. Additional writing was done during during preproduction in London, in New York just prior to Hill directing THE WARRIORS, and later, during postproduction in London.

"David Giler was on the set constantly," said Hill, "as was Gordon Carroll. Four days after I stopped shooting THE WARRIORS, I flew to London to work on the postproduction dialogue. We had a lot of that. Certain things were perceived as problems with regard to audience clarity. This was another ironic turn because it really is a simply story. One of the most controversial aspects of postproduction turned out to be the big alien you see dead in the derelict spaceship. There were strong feelings about it. Would people understand it was meant to be a victim of the title creature? In my opinion, it was endlessly confusing, though visually impressive. I thought we had enough good visual stuff. The counter argument was, 'how can we cheat the audience out of seeing this great thing?' The answer was, don't show it, and they'll never know they didn't see it.

"Making two of the male characters female, changing Mother to Ash, the film's noir edge, those were some of my contributions. I don't think that was inherent in the material, but it was inherent in what David and I got into the material. And Ridley agreed that was a good way to go. Ridley solved the problem of getting the audience to take the material seriously by laying over it this absolute veneer of technique—enormous technique. I thought the visuals were remarkable beyond my expectations, particularly the last part, where Ripley is the only one left and makes that last run. That's pure direction; performance and direction. I say performance, I mean personality. It's something Sigourney Weaver is projecting in an absolute atmosphere of Ridley's creation. You can write that kind of thing out and hope that it works, but it's all in the execution."

Despite the vast improvement in quality, the new dialogue and new plot elements that Hill and Giler brought to ALIEN, the Writer's Guild did not judge them as writers. They were judged as production executives. If they had been hired as writers to rewrite the script, with no other connection to the project, and they had written 33% of the filmed material, they would have earned co-credit. But due to their status as producers, and because they wrote as a team, they were required to write 65 to 70% of the filmed material to receive any credit at all. Obviously, there is an inequity here, but it is one that Hill and Giler accept. "I don't have any hard feelings towards Dan," says Hill. "Not at all. But as to whether or not he wrote the screenplay to ALIEN. . . I suspect a co-credit to David and I wouldn't have been out of line. The idea that David and I didn't contribute enormously is ludicrous." □

DAVID GILER

Producer

"The O'Bannon script was a bone skeleton of a story, Really terrible. Just awful. You couldn't give it away. It was amateurishly written, although the central idea was sound. Basically it was a pastiche of Fifties movies. Walter Hill and I rewrote it completely. If we had shot the original O'Bannon script, we would have had a remake of IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE."

David Giler, who wrote scripts for MYRA BRECKINRIDGE, THE PARALLAX VIEW and FUN WITH DICK AND JANE, always seemed to get his office located down the hall from scriptwriter Walter Hill, and the two became good friends while they toiled over their respective scenarios. Each had a mutual friend in producer Gordon Carroll, and a lot of casual talk about forming their own company eventually evolved into Brandywine Productions, an association of which ALIEN is the first result. Carroll brings to the company considerable experience as a line producer, and both Hill and Giler contribute their expertise at screenwriting to find and develop properties for filming. Hill and Giler collaborated on the shooting script for ALIEN, based on a script submitted by Dan O'Bannon.

Giler came to filmmaking by way of television, doing scripts for THE GALLANT

by Glenn Lovell

David Giler



MEN, KRAFT THEATRE, BURKE'S LAW, THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E and THE GIRL FROM U.N.C.L.E, plus many others. He directed his first feature, THE BLACK BIRD, from his own script in 1975.

Who at Brandywine Productions saw to it that the ALIEN script was given serious consideration at Fox?

Walter Hill probably had more to do with getting the O'Bannon script launched than anyone. Mark Haggard at Goldwyn Studios asked him to read it, and Walter championed the project from then on. It was a bone skeleton of a story then. Really terrible. Just awful. You couldn't give it away. It was amateurishly written, although the central idea was sound. Basically, it was a pastiche of Fifties movies. We—Walter Hill and I—took it and rewrote it completely, added Ash and the robot subplot. We added the cat, Jones. We also changed the characters around. We fleshed it out, basically. If we had shot the original O'Bannon script, we would have had a remake of IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE.

You mentioned that your rewrite changed some of the characters around. Could you be more specific?

Yes, of course. We made the crewmembers working class types. We made two of them women, thereby adding the feminist elements everyone is talking about. We gave the characters texture, functions. In O'Bannon's draft, they were totally different, military types. All men. We changed all the dialogue. Every word of it. Nothing is left of O'Bannon's draft. Not a word of his dialogue is left in the film.

In interviews just prior to ALIEN's release, O'Bannon argued just the opposite—that you guys took a nifty, low-budget idea and "inflated" it to the point that it lost all impact.

I would expect him to say that. He's only out for himself.

Why this ongoing feud?

There's no feud. O'Bannon's a guy trying to make a buck. He's capitalizing on the whole thing as much as he can. I can understand that. But we haven't been fighting or arguing over the phone or anything like that. We bought his script a couple of years ago. That was the end of my association with him.

What about reports of O'Bannon being on the set, working with the actors, and changing major sections of dialogue?

He was there for a while, yes. That was in his contract; that he could hang around during production. That's why we could buy the script so cheap. We optioned it from him for \$1000. Later, he wanted every credit in the book. He wanted art director credit, director of special effects. He wanted a lot of stuff. Thankfully, the unions don't permit that kind of thing. Finally, he settled for "Visual Design Consultant," whatever that is. But I can tell you he didn't change a thing when he was on the set. By the time I arrived in England, O'Bannon was gone. He was in disgrace. He was involved in a big foul-up. He was supposed to have done something with the computer read-outs. They finally had to redone.

Why, if O'Bannon's contributions were so meagre, did the Writer's Guild award him sole screenplay credit? It doesn't make sense.

You're right, it doesn't. I can't go into what transpired with the Writer's Guild right



Sigourney Weaver in Hill and Giler's "Sleeping Beauty" ending.

now. There isn't time. We'd be here all day. All I can say is it's a totally ridiculous and arbitrary process. You just can't tell with the Writer's Guild. In the end, the plot in O'Bannon's ALIEN and the one is ours are the same. Basically the same. And yet, they're as different as night and day. It's something subtler than the Writer's Guild is equipped to handle. Though the storylines are basically the same, what happens to the characters has been changed drastically. That is what has been altered.

Do you feel ALIEN was influenced by STAR WARS?

ALIEN is to STAR WARS what The Rolling Stones are to the Beatles; it's a nasty STAR WARS. We see it as a suspense-horror film. It's a richly textured film, thanks to H. R. Giger's work. We received an extra \$2.5 million from 20th Century-Fox on the basis of his storyboard ideas alone. That's how important he was to this project. His designs for the derelict ship and the alien were based on flesh, bone and machine—as if machinery were organic and could grow. It's what he calls biomechanics. We used a 6' 10" native of the Gold Coast inside the monster suit designed by Giger. We used animal and human sounds mixed for the alien's 'voice.' Composer Jerry Goldsmith added a conch sound. A local fish restaurant supplied the innards and viscera of the crustacean-like specimen examined by Ash (Ian Holm). The "chest birth" was simulated for the actors by surprising them with a shower of animal entrails. That's why their looks of disgust and horror are so real. They had no idea what we were going to shoot that day.

You also mentioned the title IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE.

We only began to hear about IT! THE TERROR towards the end of production. I haven't seen it, but I know of it. We were convinced we were doing something new stylistically, even if the basic outlines were the same. I gather the alien-hiding-on-a-space-ship idea is pretty much a classic premise with science fiction writers, like the gunfight in the western. So the similarities you refer to

didn't bother us.

Rumor has it the copyright owners of IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE are talking about suing Fox over similarities between the two films.

I haven't heard anything about it. Nothing at all. The first I heard about the similarities of the two films was from you. I know some of the more esoteric science fiction magazines have commented on tie-ins between IT! THE TERROR and ALIEN. But I'm not a regular reader of these magazines. Personally, I think it's a question you ought to address to O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett. If somebody is responsible for stealing the idea, it's them. They signed a paper saying it was an original idea. If it isn't, they lied to us. It wouldn't surprise me at all to learn that O'Bannon stole the idea. I must tell you.

Was the cocoon scene cut from the film because it received a negative response from the Dallas, Texas preview audience?

No, not at all. That sequence was taken out before the film was shown anywhere. So no one except us has seen the cocoon footage. It was removed because it simply didn't work. It interfered with the pacing of the film. It looked terrible, awful. So instead of re-doing it, we decided to write it off as a bad idea.

Would you consider pulling a 'Steven Spielberg' and re-release ALIEN with the missing eleven minutes?

No. It runs the way we like it. Sure, the extra footage would fill in some blanks for those who read the novel. But it would, we believe, interfere with the pacing of the thing. Look, I wrote the cocoon scene, and I'd love to see it replaced. Basically, it shows Ripley discovering Dallas and Brett in the alien's lair. Harry Dean Stanton has almost been reduced to egg-shape. Skeritt is still alive but beginning to change. He begs her to kill him. She blasts him with a flame thrower. We didn't show him burning, just a closeup of Ripley pulling the trigger. The horror comes from the idea of her torturing her closest friend.

Doesn't the removal of the cocoon sequence with

the egg make the thrust of the film's ad campaign a bit obscure?

No, I don't think so. First of all, the ad people never saw the film with that sequence in it. In fact, they worked up the present ads before they saw any of the film. As far as we're concerned, it's just an esoteric image. It's not supposed to be specific at all; the egg is a metaphor for the alien. A very general symbol for it. Originally, we had a Giger egg that we liked very much for the ad prototype. But the ad people finally couldn't reproduce it well enough. We showed them Giger's egg, but they ignored it and came up with their own version of it.

Hasn't anyone expressed confusion over not finding the ad egg in the film?

No one has mentioned it—except, of course, you.

Do you feel the success of ALIEN, with its R rating, validates the concept of "adult" science fiction?

I couldn't say. I really have no idea. Of course, I would like to think we have aimed for a more intelligent science fiction audience than many of the Fifties' grade-B science fiction films. So in that respect I would hope any breakthrough made by ALIEN will be reflected in future science fiction films. I do know, though, that if we'd have gone for a PG rating, we'd have had to soften this movie. The same with THE EXORCIST, I suppose. That had some really strong stuff, too. I mean JAWS certainly should have been an R. It was really violent. I mean that opening shark attack and all. There's a lot more blood in JAWS—especially in Quint's attack—than in our picture.

Wasn't Fox leery of an R rating, and wasn't there pressure to tone down the violence, gruesomeness, blood and gore, and sex?

No, just the opposite. They weren't leery of the R rating. Everybody knew from the start we'd get an R. It was always assumed. The rating aspect of our film has been inflated all out of proportion. I'm asked more about that than anything else. I can't figure out why.

Wasn't Walter Hill originally scheduled to direct? Does he have any regrets now?

No, he doesn't regret not directing. He

doesn't regret it at all. The reports have been that he stepped down because of a schedule conflict with THE WARRIORS, which he finally directed. Again, this is a media misconception. Conflict or no conflict, science fiction really isn't Walter's bag. He has no particular interest in science fiction. Never has. Nor is he particularly interested in terror. Of course, I may be absolutely wrong. He may call me tomorrow and say, "What are you talking about?" But I get that impression.

What exactly was Hill's contribution to the actual shooting of ALIEN?

A certain amount of Hill's contribution was flat engineer work—editing, casting, etc. But he wasn't at the studio at all during the shooting. His responsibilities were mostly in the preliminary stages. He had an awful lot to do with selecting the actors. We talked about it all the time. Though he wasn't involved in the actual shooting of ALIEN, his contributions, in my opinion, are not to be underestimated.

To what extent were you involved in the physical production of ALIEN?

I was involved in all the preproduction work. All the casting and that stuff. When they started getting behind in production, I joined them in London. I was there from late August [1978] to the finish—straight through the editing. I worked side-by-side with Scott in the editing room. Ridley and I got along very well.

The viewer is led in the end to think the cat has been taken over by the alien. Ripley's foolhardy return to save Jones, then the emphasis on the pet being safely stowed in the shuttle supports this suspicion. Did you ever consider going with this trick ending?

Not really. We wanted a SLEEPING BEAUTY ending. We thought it would be better to have a more lyrical ending, instead of going with the stock Hitchcockian twist.

And you've left yourselves open for a sequel. . .

Absolutely. We're involved in preliminary discussion right now. But it's still too early to say how it will unfold. Hill and I are working on it. I know a lot of people who think we intended the closeups of the cat in the shuttle as a hook for the sequel. Not so. It probably won't have anything to do with the cat. □

CARLO RAMBALDI

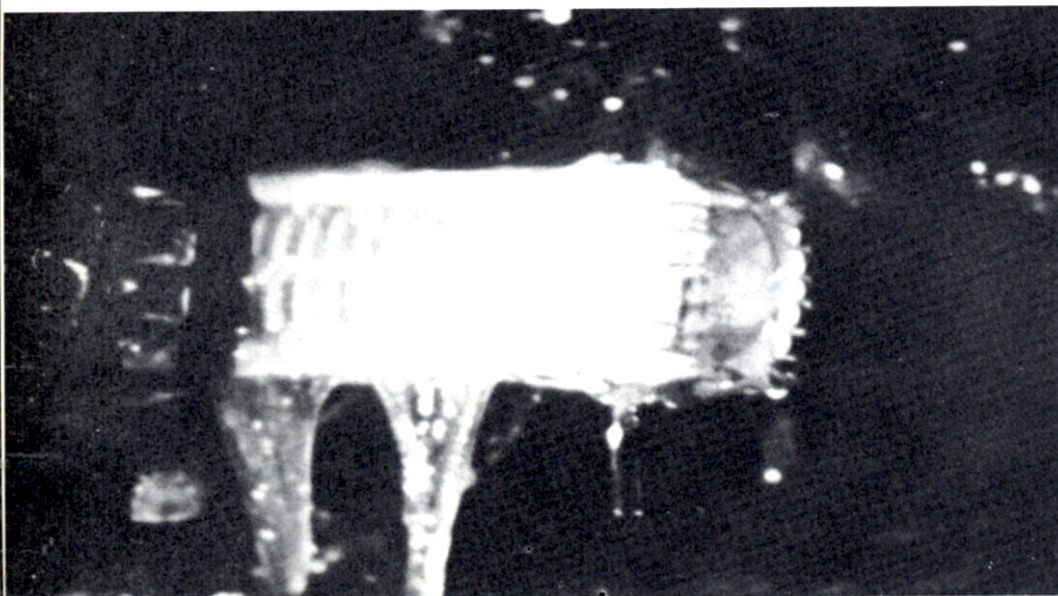
Creator of Alien Head Effects

"They use all the movements, but the head cuts are so quick, and the action is framed so predominantly in extreme closeup, that frequently it's impossible to tell what you are seeing! In my opinion, I gave the director 100 possibilities, and he used but 20."

Once Ridley Scott decided on Giger's Alien for his film, he is said to have quipped, "Well, either my problems are over or they've just begun." What Scott dreaded was the thought of using just another man in a rubber suit, which is basically what the alien seen in the film was. Scott's solution to avoid this problem was a simple one: he wouldn't show the suit. But he had to show something; enter effects master Carlo Rambaldi, with a marvelous mechanical head to instill life into Giger's alien design. Fully 90% of the alien footage seen in the film involves closeups of, or action involving movement by, Rambaldi's articulated alien head models.

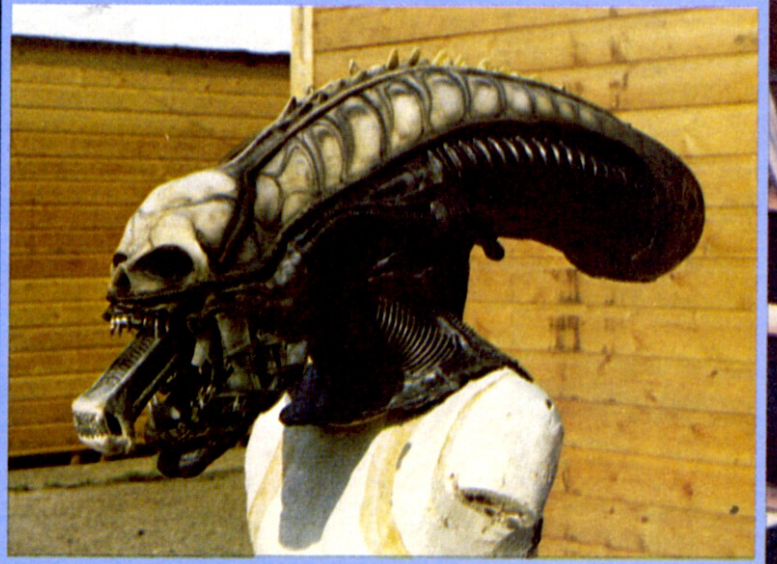
Carlo Rambaldi is, of course, the effects genius who seemed to sprout out of nowhere to cop an Academy Award in 1977 for his work on Dino DeLaurentiis' KING KONG. Although that film proved to be an effects disaster, the work done by Rambaldi, a huge and amazingly lifelike head and hand of Kong, was widely acclaimed. Unfortunately, at the same time, Rambaldi also received the brunt of criticism from angry model animation fans, who jumped all over him for designing an awkward full-size mechanical Kong for the film, something that was never really anything more than a publicity stunt in the mind of producer Dino DeLaurentiis. But even in the eyes of model animation fanatics, Rambaldi firmly established his reputation the following year with a mechan-

The protruding tongue of Carlo Rambaldi's mechanical Alien head in operation.



Right: Carlo Rambaldi poses outside his Hollywood studio with a plaster model of the mechanical head he created for ALIEN. This model, made for display purposes, was cast from the original molds used to make the polyurethane head that is used in the film. Inset: H. R. Giger with the finished mechanical head, outside of Rambaldi's workshop at Shepperton Studios.

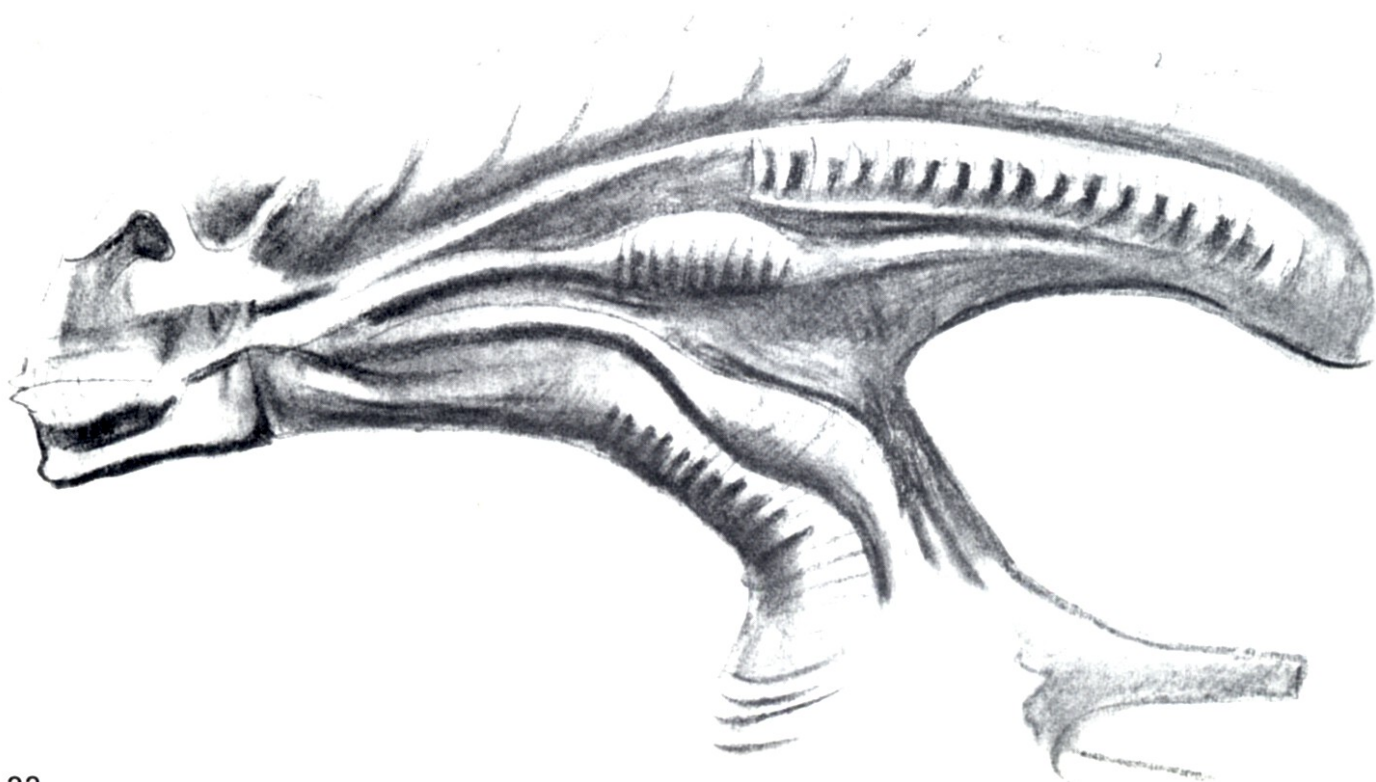
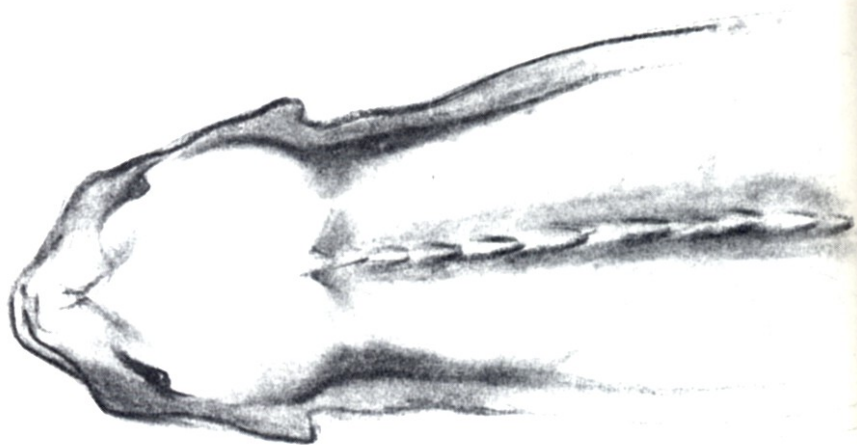
by Frederick S. Clarke and Jordan R. Fox

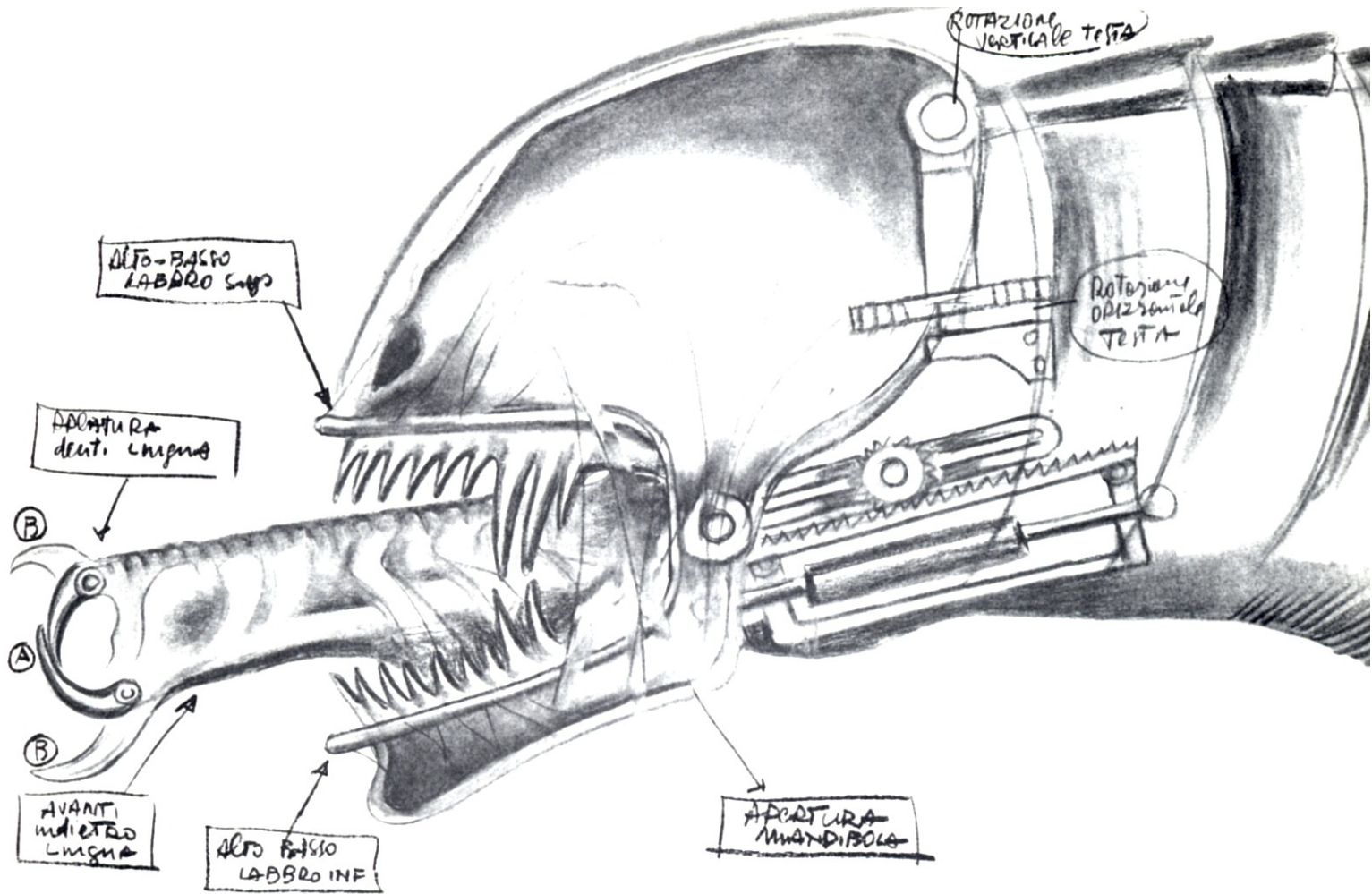




Rambaldi's Alien

As a first step toward making an articulated mechanical head, Carlo Rambaldi modified H. R. Giger's design for the Alien in a series of schematic drawings, to make it fully compatible with the mechanisms needed for its operation. Rambaldi's detailed drawing at right gives a breakdown of the movement capabilities and the mechanics involved: (reading clockwise from the bottom) jaw opens, lower lip moves up or down, tongue moves in or out, tongue's teeth open from position A to position B, upper lip moves up or down, head rotates vertically, head rotates horizontally. Rambaldi completed the finished design by working from a rough sculpture provided by the ALIEN production office, and from H. R. Giger's design paintings, including the artwork that originally inspired the design of the creature seen in the film, an early Giger painting that predated the film's conception by at least a year (see below right).





ical alien for CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND [see 7:3/7:4:4] that matched even stop-motion techniques for fluidity and versatility of movement.

Rambaldi's work for ALIEN, like that for CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, was in the role of troubleshooter, as one who was brought onto the production to save an impossible situation. "I got a call from the ALIEN production office in London," said Rambaldi. "They asked for my help because it was impossible for them to get what they wanted over there." Rambaldi agreed to study the problem, and was sent copies of Giger's design paintings for the alien, indicating the action of its protruding, tooth-encrusted tongue. Rambaldi was asked to devise the mechanism to make it all work. After studying Giger's designs, Rambaldi offered to come up with a solution in four weeks time and accepted the job.

Rambaldi began work at his Hollywood company with little collaboration from the production in England. In addition to Giger's concept paintings, Rambaldi was provided with a "rough" sculpture on which to base his work. He began by sketching a schematic of the alien head and the mechanical parts required. Working from Giger's concepts, Rambaldi devised characteristic facial movements for the alien that would suit its unique anatomy. Using these sketches, work was begun on designing the muscles and mechanisms involved. Rambaldi made his own modifications on Giger's design, dictated by the mechanisms required, and sculpted a final version of the alien's head out of clay. He forwarded a video tape of the finished clay model, showing all angles, along with copies of his design to the ALIEN production office

in England for final approval.

Given the go-ahead, Rambaldi proceeded with construction by making molds of his clay sculpture and casting the head in a special mixture of soft polyurethane, which provides a natural flexibility for the flesh-like moving parts of the alien's face. Rambaldi has developed his own custom polyurethane formula over the years, one that provides a texture that closely approximates living tissue in both stretch and appearance. Coloring, added during the mixing process, provides the alien flesh with its characteristic hue of metallic grey. The polyurethane casting of the head was formed over a strong skeletal understructure of molded fiberglass. Movable fiberglass parts, covered in polyurethane, such as the Alien's face, jaws, and protruding tongue, were attached to the fiberglass head by means of interlocking joints. The Alien's skull-like face is attached to the head at one pivot point which permits controlled independent movement in either a horizontal or vertical direction. This allows the Alien's face to glance from side to side, or up and down, without making a corresponding movement of the entire head. The protruding action of the tongue is governed by a geared track for smooth movement, and operates independently from the action of the jaw muscles. The tongue could move slowly, and stop at any point, or could be shot away from and returned to the head in a quick movement governed by a powerful spring mechanism. Rows of metallic teeth are attached to the upper and lower jaw, and behind these, movable sets of additional teeth are placed on the end of the tongue, which opens like another little mouth and

acts like a grappler. Rambaldi chose to fashion the Alien's teeth out of polished steel for maximum reflectivity, adding just the right touch to make the creature's appearance as a cold, vicious, nearly indestructible killer, more convincing. Controls for the upper and lower lips of the Alien were installed to permit the creature to bare its hideous teeth merely by curling its lips. Prophylactics, three on each side, were used to simulate the tendons which attach the jaw to the skull. Being translucent, they permitted visibility of the moving tongue inside the mouth from side angles. The final touch was a 1/2" thick, shiny plastic dome which covers the top of the head, from the nose up, for its entire length. Capable of being both translucent or opaque depending upon the lighting and camera angles employed, the dome gave the Alien an ever-changing appearance.

continued page 26

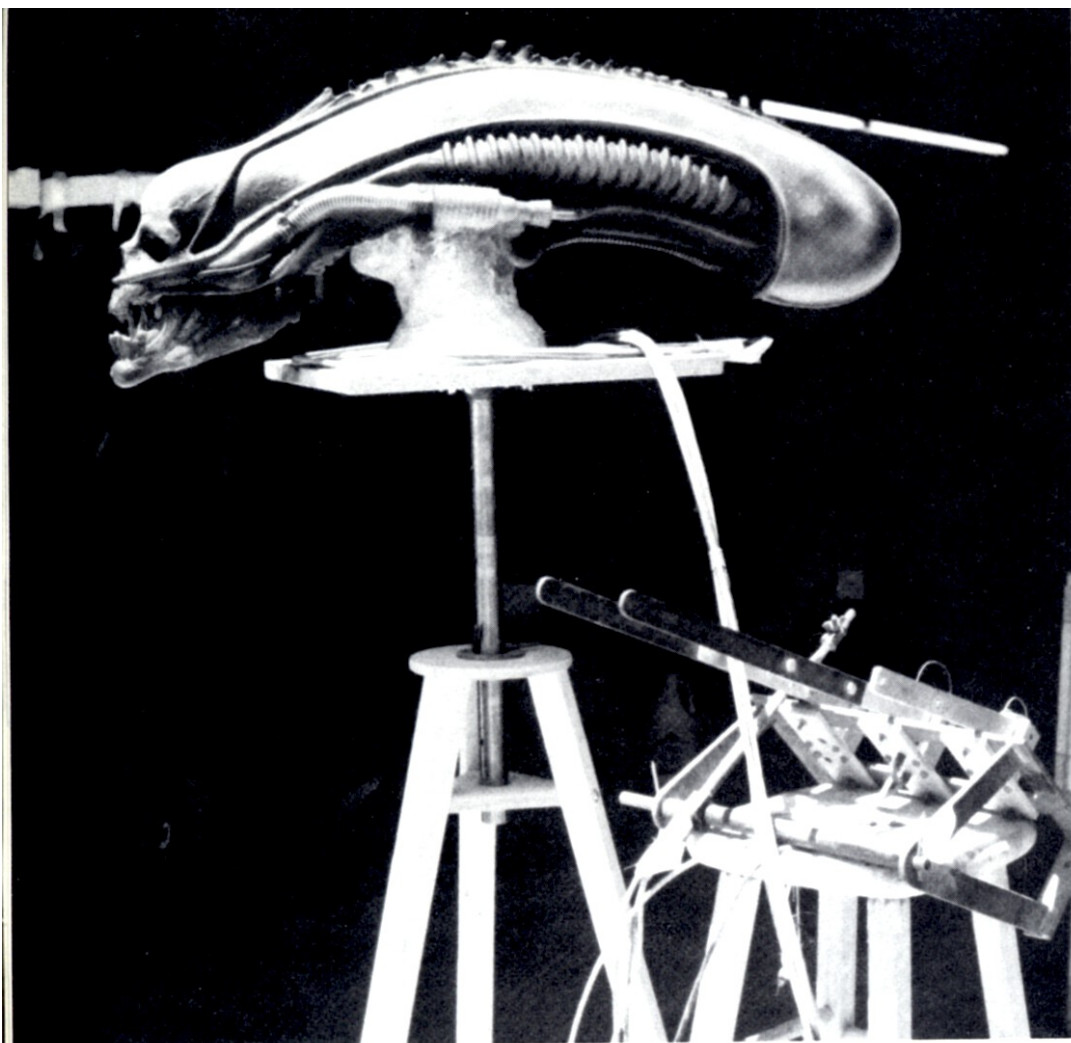
Giger's Alien...

Shown overleaf is *Necronom IV*, a 100x150 centimeter painting completed by H. R. Giger in 1976, and published the following year as a plate in H. R. Giger's *Necronomicon*, a stunning compendium of the artist's work. While leafing through the book, director Ridley Scott was instantly captivated by it. Says Scott, "It was the most frightening thing I'd ever seen. I knew immediately that here was our creature." Scott hired Giger soon after to create the film's Alien based on this design. Although Giger's painting has a surreal dimensional quality, a sculptured look that makes you feel you can almost reach out and touch it, no such lingering glimpse allows us to witness the creature's strange beauty in the film. H. R. Giger is interviewed on page 25.

...turn page







Rambaldi constructed three heads for use in the film: two mechanical heads used primarily for close-up work, and a lightweight, non-mechanical head for longshots. Of the two mechanical heads, only one was fully mechanized to perform all of the head movement functions he designed, and was the one that was used most of the time during filming. The second mechanical head was lighter in weight and easier to work with, but was rigged only to cause the creature's lips to curl. Rambaldi delivered the completed heads to England and spent two weeks there conferring with director Ridley Scott, working on the painting and final detailing of the models, and instructing the production team on their operation and movement capabilities. Due to prior commitments, Rambaldi could not be on hand for the actual shooting, but brought in his collaborator from Rome, Carlo DeMarchis, to train the crew and supervise the operation of the controls during filming.

Each movement of Rambaldi's articulated Alien head is controlled separately by hand via the action of a flexible cable. A lever control causes the cable to constrict or release, causing a corresponding action on a muscle, tendon, or moving part of the model. The principle involved is the same as that which operates the cable release on a camera. Each cable runs up into the head through the neck opening, and is 45 feet in length, to permit both concealment within the suit as well as considerable freedom of movement for action scenes. During the filming of ALIEN, it took a crew of six operators to control all of the head movements for the most complex scenes. In contrast, only a maximum of seven operators were required to manipulate the Rambaldi alien seen in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, and that involved torso and body movements in addition to those of the head, giving some indication of the much greater complexity of head movement capabilities designed by Rambaldi for ALIEN. Special techniques employed during the shooting which added a note of realism included running fluid through the mouth as the creature opened its jaws, providing a cascade of saliva; KY Jelly added a glistening, membranous appearance to the action of the protruding tongue; and oil was rubbed onto the head to give it a sweaty, reflective sheen.

Rambaldi designed and constructed the articulated heads with a wealth of fine detail to stand up under long camera scrutiny, from any angle. Most of this detail and the head's potential for subtle, life-like movement is never fully exploited in the film. Laughs Rambaldi with some dismay, "When I show this head to my friends, they are surprised. 'This is the alien?!,' they all exclaim. They



Right: Carlo Rambaldi's design sketch of the mechanical head's tongue movement capabilities: (reading from top to bottom) ALIEN Space Monster, gnashing action of the lips, jaw opens, teeth on the tip of the tongue open, tongue advances up to 20 centimeters. Rambaldi's drawing at top shows the placement of the plastic dome which covers the top of the head for its entire length. Top Left: The plaster model of the head posed to show placement when worn by actor Bolaji Badejo, as well as the levered cable control mechanism which operates the various head movements by hand. Bottom Left: Rambaldi and an assistant attach one of the radio-controlled bats he created for NIGHTWING to a pole arm for filming.

don't even recognize it because you never get a complete view of it in the film. They use all the movements, but the head cuts are so quick, and the action is framed so predominantly in extreme closeup, that frequently it's impossible to tell what you are seeing! If I had collaborated with the director, which was not possible in this case, I would have preferred more screen time for the audience to notice details. In my opinion, I gave the director 100 possibilities, and he used but 20. Perhaps he had a reason for this approach. Perhaps he felt the alien was better left to the imagination."

One fine detail, not likely ever to be noticed in the film, and not evident from still photographs, is a subtle bulging jugular movement, as the creature opens its jaws. Ralph Cobis, one of Rambaldi's assistants in Hollywood, who works primarily in the area of mold preparation and casting, points out: "These movements were of extreme importance because they totally eliminated the suggestion of the human form." By concentrating his camera on Rambaldi's articulated head, Scott was able to let himself off the man-in-a-suit hook, and avoided showing the basically human physique of the monster. Rambaldi is quick to credit H. R. Giger's unique head design for the success of the Alien. "The head's profile banishes any thought of a man in a suit," says Rambaldi. "I prefer the image of the profile. From the front you have approximately the same lines as a human head." Scott never once shows the alien directly from the front, probably for this reason, and frames it always from varying profile angles, showing it in its full glory for only one fleeting moment at the end.

The cable system used by Rambaldi to achieve the special effects in ALIEN is basically the same system he introduced to Hollywood in KING KONG, and used later in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. Rambaldi's use of the system on three of his greatest effects achievements has led to the false impression that he specializes in this technique, to the exclusion of others. This is not the case. "Sometimes I use electricity, hydraulics or radio control as a triggering mechanism," he explains. "The solution of a special effects problem depends on many things: the type of picture, the action of the sequence, the kind of movement involved, the director, whether filming will take place on a soundstage or on location, and the budget and time allotted. Many factors." One of the projects for which Rambaldi has been developing effects is Robert Towne's GREYSTOKE, the definitive screen adaptation of Edgar Rice Burrough's Tarzan of the Apes saga. "For example," adds Rambaldi in illustration, "if you have a creature that jumps from tree to tree, it's not possible to use the cable system. You must use electricity or radio control, and that depends on the budget." For NIGHTWING, Rambaldi used radio control techniques to operate a flock of mechanical bats. "Radio control is more costly," he emphasizes, "but the quality is basically the same as cable." Radio control becomes necessary when the nature of the operation of a model prevents the use of a cable attachment of any kind. For effects such as those seen in ALIEN, the cable system has the advantage of allowing the operator to develop a feeling for the controls. By varying speed and pressure in the hand-

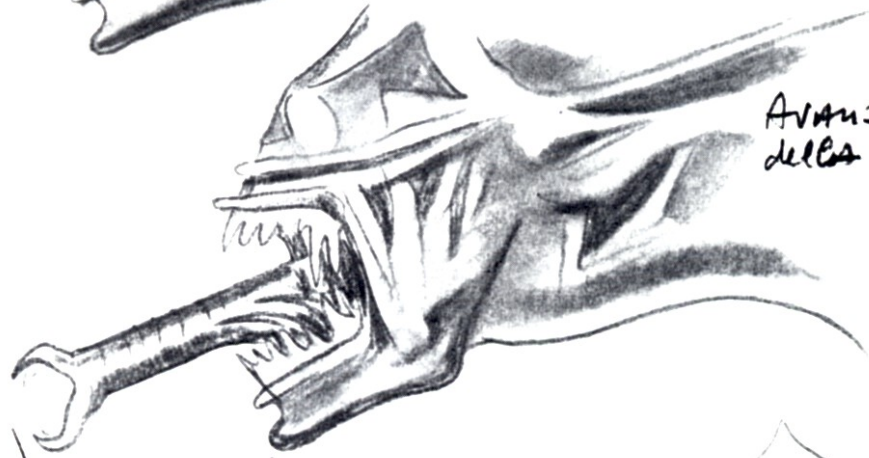
-ALIEN-
NOSTRO SPAZIALE



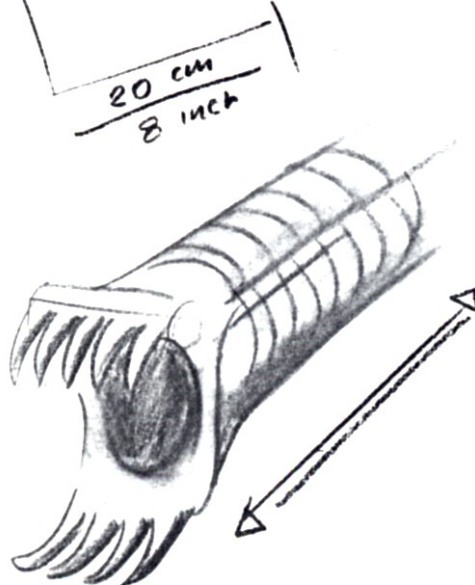
PIGRIEZZIONE
delle LABBRA



Apertura mandibola
Apertura denti in punta
alla lingua

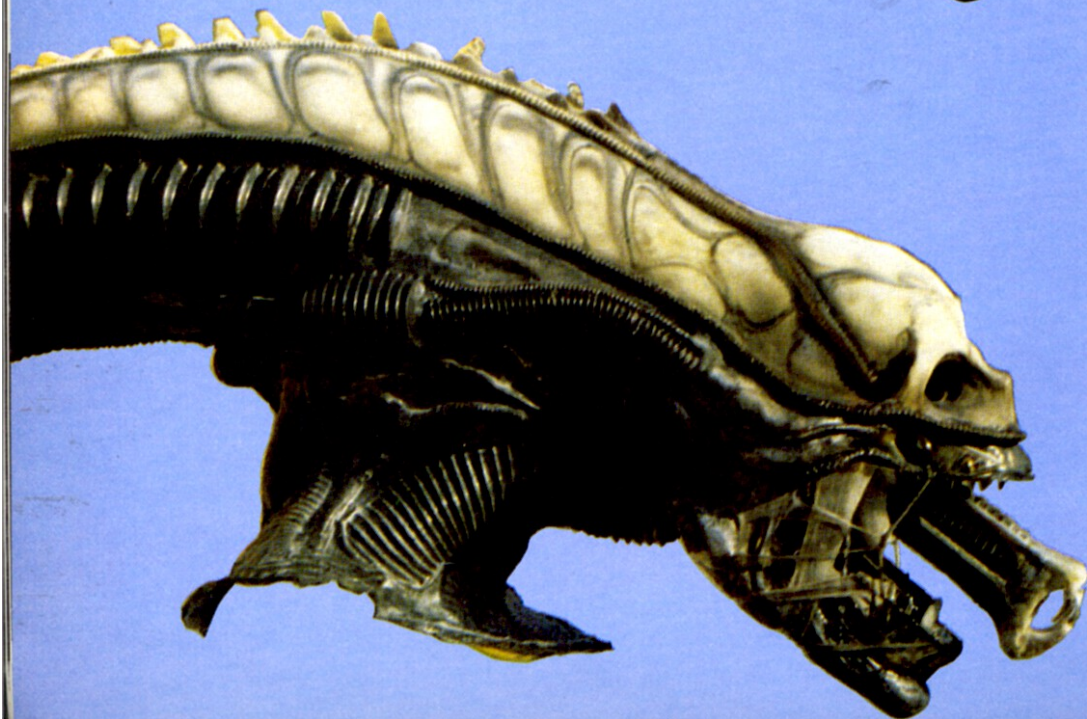
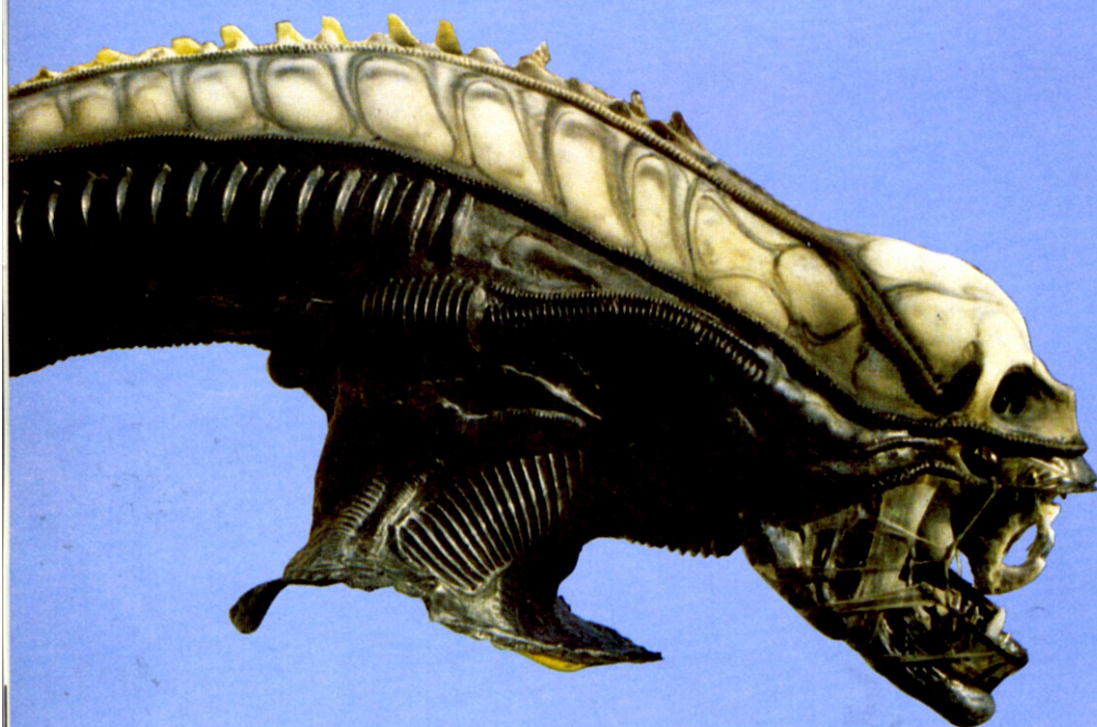
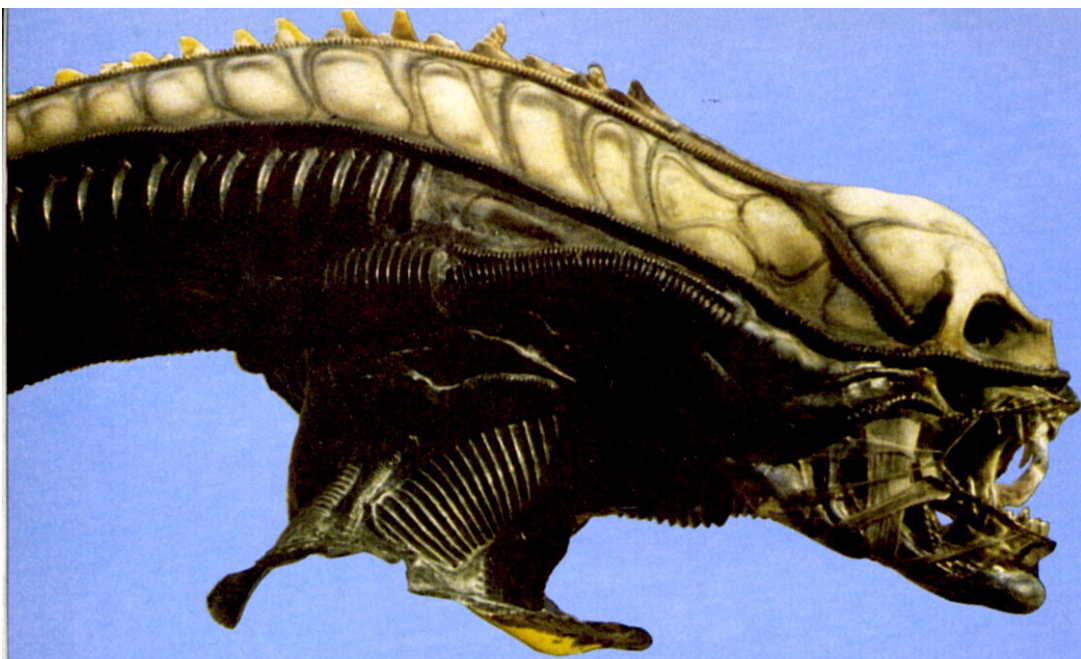


Avanzamento
della lingua.



20 cm
8 inch





manipulation of cable levers, with practice, more subtle movements can be achieved than with the remote control switching system of radio control.

When Rambaldi came to this country in 1976 to work on KING KONG, he was largely unknown, although he had worked for twenty years in the Italian film industry on more than 350 films and television shows. "I prefer working in Hollywood," says Rambaldi. "In Italy films are budgeted much lower, and consequently must be made very fast. That means I had less time to do my work, which made it impossible for me to achieve the level of quality I have reached here. In Italy it was impossible for me to perfect an effect to its full potential." Adds assistant Ralph Cobis, "There is a natural progression of discovery and innovation in effects work. In Italy, where time is short, you can't take advantage of this learning process. You have to stop one-third of the way, and turn something in, because there is no time to make changes. Over here, Carlo can go all the way, because they give him the time." The cost of an effect depends on the level of quality and sophistication desired. Because of lower budgets, Italian producers frequently demanded only second or third rate effects from the outset. "Here," beams Carlo about America, "all productions want maximum level quality, strictly first class. This atmosphere is good for realizing my full potential."

Rambaldi was born September 15, 1926 in Ferrara, Italy. In 1947, he graduated from Ferrara's Vincenzo Monti Technical Institute, and four years later received a degree in motion picture art direction from Bologna's Academy of Fine Arts. Assistant Ralph Cobis attributes Rambaldi's great success in this country to his educational background. Says Cobis, "Carlo combines an understanding of mechanical engineering with a strong artistic background. Whereas here in Hollywood you find people who just work in makeup, putting on appliances like a mask, or who just works in special effects, using techniques like hydraulic movement and remote control. Carlo's background brings these two fields together. With a strong grounding in art, he has been able to develop mechanical models for special effects drawing upon his knowledge of anatomy." After his Oscar-winning work on KING KONG, Rambaldi established his own Hollywood effects company, "Carlo Rambaldi—Sculptures and Electro-mechanical Creations for Cinematography," and employs seven full-time specialists as well as thirty part-time assistants. Rambaldi considers his relocation in Hollywood to be permanent. "I have a green card now," he says proudly, referring to his work permit as a resident alien, granted by the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Quips Cobis: "Yeah, no more raids." □

BOLAJI BADEJO "The Alien"

"There was one part where I was hanging from a wire about ten or fifteen feet above the ground, and I curled up. I was like a cocoon of my own, and I come out very slowly and stretch all out."

The Alien you don't get to see in ALIEN was played by 6' 10", 26-year-old Nigerian Bolaji Badejo. Bolaji is a student of graphic arts in London, and has traveled extensively with his parents, to Ethiopia where he studied fine arts, and to the United States, including a three-year stay in San Francisco. He landed the role of "The Alien" purely by accident, a turn of events that reads like a publicity agent's tall tale. The production had apparently put out a casting call for a very tall, very thin actor. Bolaji bumped into agent Peter Archer while having a drink in a London West End pub. Archer thought of ALIEN as soon as he spotted Bolaji, and offered him the chance to try out for the part. "As soon as I walked in," said Bolaji, "Ridley Scott knew he'd found the right person." Scott had been looking at basketball players, and had tested Peter Mayhew for the alien, but it was Badejo's combination of height, slimness and an erect posture that cinched him in the part. Bolaji was signed for the role in May, manufacture of the suit began, and the filming of the Alien scenes started in August at Shepperton.

Ridley Scott originally intended Bolaji to be part of a team of three artists needed to

by Frederick S. Clarke
and Alan Jones

The Alien (Bolaji Badejo) attempts to crawl out of the shuttlecraft bulkhead at the end of the film.



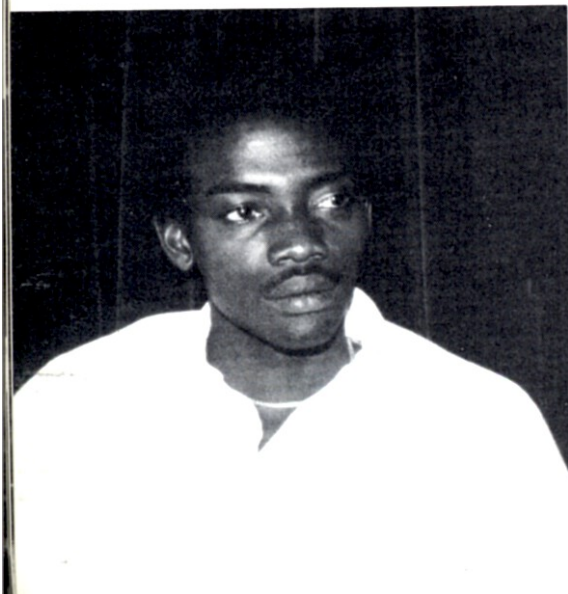
Left: Three series' of poses, front and side views, show the operation of the articulated head built by Carlo Rambaldi for ALIEN, and the movement of its mechanical tongue. View at top right shows how the head could bear its steel teeth merely by curling its lips. View at bottom right shows how rows of teeth on the end of the tongue could be made to open. Note in side views the use of prophylactics for translucent jaw muscles and tendons. These poses show the skull-like appearance of the head, particularly from the front, when viewed without its translucent plastic top, which makes it appear smooth and dolphin-like throughout most of the film, as shown at right.

it work.

Scott filmed several variations of his concept of the monster descending from above onto Harry Dean Stanton, but none of them worked. In one set-up, Badejo was strapped onto a large see-saw-like boom arm that could be raised from the ground to tilt straight up some 20 feet in the air. When it came down full circle, Bolaji was upside down, with blood just rushing to his head, feeling very dizzy. Enough was enough! Bolaji declined to repeat the stunt, so Scott got the stuntman to try it, but he fainted! Eventually, Scott rigged the boom arm with a dummy suit and tried to film the same action, but it wouldn't work without a host to animate the Alien's movements. Scott filmed some footage of the stuntman being lowered head-first on wires, picking up another stuntman doubling for Harry Dean Stanton, and whisking him back up to the ceiling of the ship, out of frame. In the end, Scott was forced to resort to closeups and quick cuts to suggest the action of the sequence.

H. R. Giger made the Alien suits worn by Bolaji and the stuntman out of latex, at a cost of more than \$250,000. The suit consisted of some ten to fifteen separate pieces, worn over a one-piece black body suit, needed underneath to disguise the fact that the Alien fitted together in sections, and because you could see through parts of it, like the rib cage. The rib cage was put on like a sweater, over the head. The legs and hips were put on like a pair of pants, zipped up from the side. The arms were put on separately as sleeves, fitted over with gloves for the hands. The tail was attached separately and operated by a series of wires. Feet were worn like shoes. The head was placed on last. Bolaji likened wearing it to having your head stuck in the middle of a huge banana. "I had to keep my head up straight. That was the secret of wearing the suit," he said. "The Nostromo set itself was only about 6' 6" high. I'm 6' 10", 7' with the suit on. I had to be very careful how I spun around or did anything. It was terribly hot, especially the head. I could only have it on for about fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. When I took it off, my head would be soaked." In addition to the non-mechanical head for action scenes, Bolaji wore Carlo Rambaldi's articulated head for special effects shots. "It was all manual, remote con-

Bolaji Badejo



Michael Seymour

trolled," said Bolaji. "There's still a space in it for my head. I had it on just to make sure nothing goes wrong with the posture of the head or how tall it is in comparison to the other sequences.

"They must have had about 2000 tubes of K-Y Jelly," he laughed, "just to get the effect of that slime coming out of his mouth. A lot of it was spread around on the face. I could barely see what was going on around me, except when I was in a stationary position while they were filming. Then there were a few holes I could look through."

Bolaji only wore the suit for sequences in which the Alien's full body would be on view. For sequences where just an arm or part of the body was needed, anyone could double as the Alien by donning part of the suit. Bolaji, for instance, did not play the scene with Tom Skerrit inside the Nostromo's cramped ventilation shaft, where only part of the creature's crouched body is visible. For some sequences a dummy in the suit was used, such as the climax where the Alien is sucked out of the shuttlecraft and fried by the ship's jet exhaust. The shuttlecraft sequences at the end of the film were some of the most interesting and difficult shots for Bolaji, and provided most of the useable Alien footage. Climbing into the cramped shuttlecraft bulkhead and then out again for each take put a lot of strain on the suit, which kept splitting. "Bursting out of that compartment wasn't easy," exclaims Bolaji. "I must've ripped the suit two or three times coming out, and each time I'd climb down, the tail would rip off! But it wasn't much of a problem for them, because they had more suits. I remember I had to repeat that action for about fifteen takes. Finally, I said, 'No more!' There was a lot of smoke, it was hard to breathe, and it was terribly hot."

Bolaji regrets that no one can recognize him as the Alien in the film, but thinking back on Boris Karloff, Christopher Lee, or other successful actors who began their careers by playing grotesque monsters, he adds, "The fact that I played the part of the Alien, for me, that's good enough. Legally, I'll be given the opportunity of doing a follow-up, if there is one." Although he is training for a career in graphic design and commercial art, he exclaims, "Not if a film comes along!" □

MICHAEL SEYMOUR

Production Designer

"There was always this difficulty about the alien though, because inevitably, however well you do it, however beautifully-designed the suit is, it is still going to look like a man dressed-up."

Michael Seymour started-off wanting to be a painter. He went to the Royal College of Art for three years and took a course to train as a designer for television. He started as an assistant at ABC Television in London, now called Thames Television. "But I didn't like TV," he says. "It was too factory-like even then. So I went to Greece for a year." When he came back, after working for some time as a photographer, he saw VIVA ZAPATA for the fifth time, "and my eyes were opened to film as a working medium." Seymour had worked in TV commercials before graduating to feature films, his first credit as assistant art director on Richard Lester's THE KNACK (1965). Seymour worked in preproduction on Tony Richardson's THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE (1968), but production delays forced him onto other projects and kept him from working on Richardson's big-budget costume adventure: ROBBERY (for which he aided director Peter Yates in planning an elaborate car chase), THE BED-SITTING ROOM (1969), THE LOVES OF ISADORA, SOLDIER SOLDIER (an unfinished Orson Welles feature), BLOW-UP, GUMSHOE, ROSEBUD, and he converted an old theatre in Putney for THEATRE IN BLOOD. After work for director Claude Chabrol fell through on THE ST. PETERSBURG-CANNES EXPRESS when the film was cancelled, Seymour accepted an offer from associate producer Ivor Powell to work on ALIEN.

Seymour had worked with Ridley Scott on television commercials, and was very pleased to work with him again: "I have an enormous admiration for Ridley. Of all the directors I've worked with, he is the most exceptional. Working with someone who is visually-oriented and who communicates in those terms is very stimulating."

Seymour started on ALIEN and literally didn't stop from that moment on for seventeen weeks. "On reading the script, the film seemed a mammoth task for all of us," he recalled. "I had understood the budget was around \$8½ million. But as we got into it we realized that was in fact not a great deal of money." Seymour took the trouble to re-

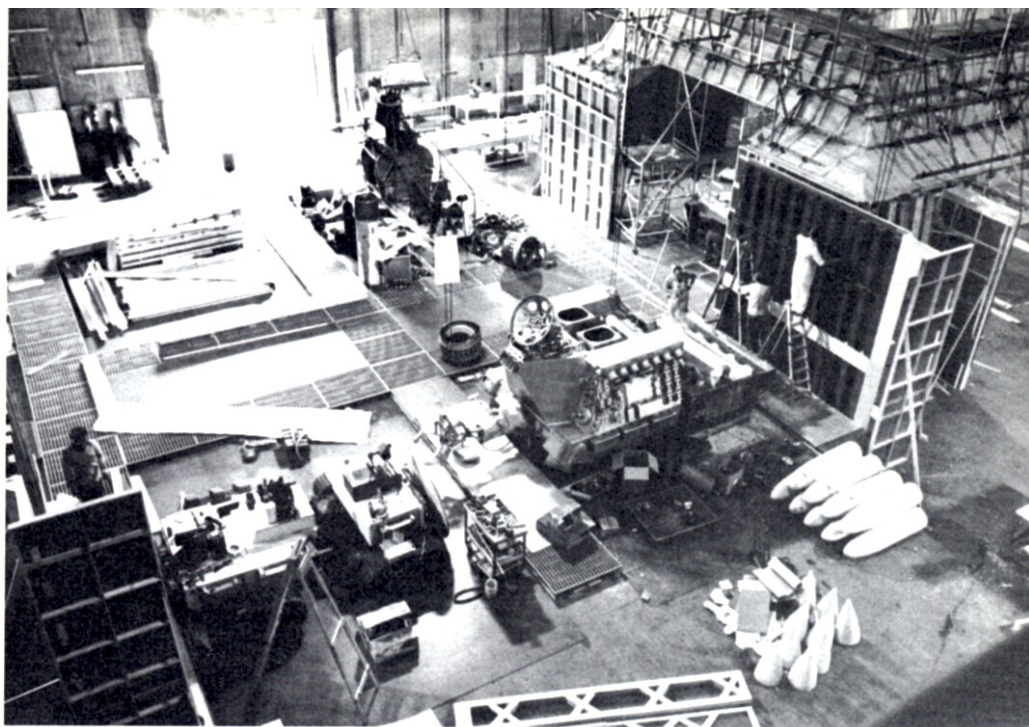
by Alan Jones

search the production ills and budget problems of Fox's previous space-bound bonanza, STAR WARS. "They had more money than we did, but we had the same amount of problems," he said, pointing out that with the effect of inflation, the budget he had to work with would buy less production value today. Of course, after reviewing the budget and re-evaluating the ambitions of the ALIEN project, Fox executives shelled out additional funds, giving Seymour and Scott a chance to do the movie the way it should be done.

"In the meantime," explains Seymour, "I began the design process. Dan O'Bannon was with us at this stage, and Ron Cobb was concept artist. Cobb had produced some sketches that were clever but not in the way in which we had decided to treat ALIEN. Ridley and I had had long discussions on the spacecraft, and had decided that it was to be an intergalactic super-tanker schlepping its way through space. We wanted to avoid anything slick or shiny." Seymour had made models of the Nostromo interiors before meeting Cobb. "Cobb was useful," he says, "because you could pass him an idea or a model, and he would do an excellent sketch for people who can't understand plans or models. I was really heading a design group on this picture in which everybody contributed, from the draftsmen, when he adds details as he draws something, up to the plasterer on the floor of the soundstages. Over a two month period, we all built up the concepts."

Seymour did layouts of the Nostromo where the various decks would be located, where the quarters would begin, end and intersect one another; this master plan included the bridge set, which Seymour feels was the most complicated aspect of the set design. "You never quite get the feeling in the final film, but we put so much effort into the finish of the ship's interiors. We worked it out so carefully. There was the deck with living quarters where the bridge was, the next one down was the electronics deck, and the lower deck, where Harry Dean Stanton gets it, we called the under-carriage room. It housed one of those huge landing feet. We built one life-size foot and hung it from the ceiling in that set. We worked out carefully the placement of each compartment, where it would be below or above in relation to the next deck." Seymour developed the sets with an eye towards practicality, blocking out the three soundstages used in ALIEN so the crew wouldn't lose track of the maze-like system of corridors and levels. The interiors were all completely self-contained and enclosed: the rooms were four-sided and had ceilings—according to Seymour, "You really were in a real ship. We aimed at that all the time, to create a convincing environment that we believed in and that therefore the actors too would believe in. A lot of the interiors were broken-down aircraft sections remodelled almost like metal sculpture."

H. R. Giger worked with Seymour on the designs based on Giger's biomechanics, including the concept of the planetoid's surface, the derelict ship, and the Alien. "I found his imagination amazing," says Seymour. "There was always this difficulty about the alien though, because inevitably, however well you do it, however beautifully-designed the suit is, it is still going to look like



The lower maintenance deck of the Nostromo takes shape on a Shepperton sound stage.

a man dressed-up." Ridley Scott and Seymour had plenty of discussions regarding the alien, finally deciding that they wouldn't reveal it until the last possible moment, and if they could get away with it, they would not reveal it at all! Seymour explains, "The creature looked amazing but it was impossible to show it full-length. Very early on, we talked about stop-motion animation, but ultimately made the decision against that mainly for economic reasons. I think we made the right decision. We kept the alien as subliminal as possible and I think that it worked."

Despite the lavish and expensive look of Seymour's art designs, his department was constantly on guard in case Fox called up and complained that the costs were too high. Seymour did have to pare the art department budget down from original estimates; the actual cost of producing the designs was considerably more than anyone had ever estimated. The original predicted cost was about £900,000 plus £250,000 for props. Seymour had to reduce that figure by forty percent to £620,000 and £150,000 for props. "Fox would ask every couple of weeks or so how it was going and insist that we reduce our costs by reusing our sets and adapting existing items. We did a lot of recycling on the film, but you would never notice."

"Fitting everything into the budget was the biggest problem on this film. It was a conjuring trick in the end to get the amount of production value we did out of what was not a large budget." According to Seymour, Giger's "space jockey" was a big problem. The cavernous interior of the derelict spaceship was supposed to have been much larger, but space, time and money made Seymour arrive at a successful compromise: he came up with the idea of placing the creature on a turntable in the center of the set, allowing for shots with the actors from seemingly different angles, which gave the illusion that the set was fully enclosed on four sides. The fact is only one stationary wall section was built. Says Seymour, "That was a very elaborate piece of construction."

After production began, an original shooting schedule of thirteen weeks had adjusted itself to a more realistic period of seventeen weeks. For Seymour, it was seventeen weeks working every weekend, either on Saturday or Sunday, and for eleven weeks working seven days a week, sometimes until midnight. "There was no way you could leave it alone. I was always making decisions. Once you've started a building program of 110 construction workers and prop men, it's a formidable thing to keep up with. I was fortunate to have the people I worked with—they contributed on every level."

Seymour is not displeased with the way some scenes were edited from the film—"From my point of view, there wasn't much that wasn't used. The scene of Tom Skerritt encased inside the alien's cocoon took place in the under-carriage, but the effect was not a great expense. And there were some scenes of the landscape we did which later I see were done as model or glass shots."

Since ALIEN has been released, Seymour finds that he has yet to become truly objective towards his work on the film. "When I see it in five years' time, I might be able to get it into perspective." He is, in the meantime, "bowled over by people's reaction to the film. I really thought it would have a limited audience. When I saw it in America, I was amazed by the audience reaction. There it was, like a football match—you couldn't fail to get carried away by it all. It definitely has the makings of being a cult film."

Recently, Seymour has been moving into the area of film direction. He worked second unit on THE COMING, a film by Robert Fuest (DR. PHIBES, THE LAST DAYS OF MAN ON EARTH), in which Seymour directed a 4½-minute sequence of a girl melting. He is interested in directing a "period piece," or perhaps a documentary. As far as science fiction films are concerned, "It was interesting but I don't think I'm in love with that sort of hardware. It's funny but with all these effects involved, you begin by not knowing anything, and end up, because you have to know them, being a minor expert." □

IVOR POWELL

Associate Producer

"The ALIEN script was wonderful to read, written in Hill's blank verse, linear sort of style, but it was very violent. At this stage, heads were being twisted off bodies and the still-kicking torsos were dragged off down the ship's corridor. Very reminiscent of THE THING, I thought, but with 70's gore."

Lexington Street, in the heart of London's West End, is where Ridley Scott Associates can be found. It is also where the associate producer of ALIEN, dynamic Ivor (pronounced E-vor) Powell, can be found. Powell, who could quite justifiably call himself Ridley Scott's closest friend and confidant, has been in the industry for eighteen years. "I worked for the BBC for awhile," says Powell, "and I got my ticket. But in all honesty, I hadn't really stayed in a particular position long enough—I was a struggling second assistant director. I got a call one day from Roger Karras, who was for want of a better description, Stanley Kubrick's "exploitation" public relations director. He'd heard I was looking for a job, and Kubrick needed an assistant. Kubrick was my hero so I was there like Speedy Gonzales. I worked with Kubrick on 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY for the first six months of its production, in the art

by Mike Childs
and Alan Jones

Ivor Powell



department with supervisor Tony Masters and set dresser Bob Cartwright. I was the production liaison man between that department and companies like IBM and Honeywell. I was troubleshooter, albeit in a junior capacity, bringing in these companies on hardware and publicity deals. I learned more on that picture than I will ever learn." Powell met Ridley Scott while working together on a commercial for BBC-TV, "and we got along like a house on fire." Powell was first assistant director at Ridley Scott Associates, as well as on THE OPTIMISTS (1974) and some feature documentaries. This led to becoming associate producer on both of Scott's features, THE DUELLISTS and ALIEN.

Were you familiar at all with science fiction films before working on ALIEN?

Yes, I've always been a fan. In the winter of 1977, Sandy Lieberman at Fox sent Ridley the Walter Hill-David Giler script version. I was trying to wrestle it from his hands, saying I was the buff, not him. But all I kept hearing were screeches and him saying it was amazing. He read it in 45 minutes and then I read it. It was wonderful, but I said it was a rip-off of IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE. Ridley had never been interested in this sort of film before. The ALIEN script was wonderful to read, written in Hill's blank verse, linear sort of style, but it was very violent. At this stage, heads were being twisted off bodies and the still-kicking torsos were dragged off down the ship's corridor. Very reminiscent of THE THING, I thought, but with Seventies gore.

Was Scott able to work up a fresh approach to the material nonetheless?

One of the good things about Ridley was that he hadn't seen a Hammer film or any other horror films for that matter. He used his own approach, and I think it works. O'Bannon did show him THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE, mainly to make Ridley realize the extremes to which you could go on the screen.

We had been unsuccessful in getting TRISTAN AND ISEULT off the ground and, even though he liked the ALIEN script, Ridley wanted to do TRISTAN. He phoned Sandy Lieberman and said that if he hadn't been obligated to TRISTAN, he would have seriously considered doing ALIEN. Then we had another set-back with TRISTAN and Ridley got cold feet, as he suddenly realized the length of time he was having between pictures. And he said yes to ALIEN out of the blue.

What was your involvement with Ridley once the production got underway?

I can imagine what the American producers thought when they heard that Ridley had a sidekick. "Oh my God, not another hanger-on." The truth of the matter was, Hill wasn't around, Giler had not produced a movie before, and his title of producer was more of an arrangement with Brandywine Productions. It was really Gordon [Carroll] and I, but Gordon was executive producer, executive in the way that he wasn't a working producer, as you can't come over to a foreign country and crew-up a movie. So I did the day-to-day running, scheduling and budgeting, ably assisted by Garth Thomas, who usually works with Alan Parker. It was a tough movie to make, you've obviously heard all

the rumors about the pressures and agonies, but after actually getting through it all, through the arguments and different camps that formed, I still hold to the belief that sometimes imperfect conditions for making a movie creates a soup, a spark. And that makes for a great picture.

And for a great deal of pressure.

I felt the pressure more as I got to know Fox, and they got to know me. At first, Fox thought of the film as another of THE OMEN-type. I don't think any of us, O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett included, were aware of what Ridley had in mind and the class level he was going to take it. The initial budget was \$4½ million, and when we came to grips with that and realized it wasn't going to be enough, there was a feeling that Fox would pull the plug and wrap it. It was only Ridley's ability to storyboard that pulled us through. He showed them the TRISTAN AND ISEULT storyboards just to give them ideas. A lot of ideas for ALIEN came from that other film. The space suits, for example, were based on Samurai armor, interlocking colored pieces. They are a work of art. Jean Giraud, who designed the suits, was given all the ideas by Ridley. In turn, I introduced Ridley to Heavy Metal [magazine] while we were reading THE DUELLISTS in the Dordogne. When he saw the magazine, he said, "Why don't they make science fiction films to look like this?"

Getting back to the point, why didn't Fox pull the plug on ALIEN?

We did a screen test for Sigourney Weaver that gave Fox a jolt, and certainly sold Sigourney Weaver. The test cost very little money and was quite effective. Fox didn't have a principal picture for this year, and they were banking on ALIEN being the one to come between the two STAR WARS', but in that sense I think they were hoping that ALIEN would make back close to what THE OMEN made. Touch wood, but I think we'll do in excess of the \$60 million THE OMEN made. I always had a good feeling about ALIEN. It was the perfect subject to make at this moment. I thought until recently that I was mad and everybody else was right. Everyone used to look at me reading science fiction paperbacks and mutter under their breath that I'd actually admitted to seeing THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL about eight times. Now, of course, this attitude is normal, it's okay to like this sort of movie. I hope with ALIEN we've gone some way in redressing the balance, as this kind of film is always thought of tongue-in-cheek.

How would you describe ALIEN?

ALIEN is a hardcore adult cartoon. I'll get murdered for using that word, cartoon, but that's what I think it is. The criticism leveled at it, regarding character involvement, stems from the style it was originally written in. We tried to actually break that, and tried to make them behave more humanly, but Walter Hill writes in such a cold fashion. Look at the hero in THE DRIVER. It's a style you either like or don't like. It was stark when we took it on, and mixed with Giler's cynical approach, the characters were full of slick remarks. Our fears were consolidated when the actors arrived: they had to watch a stomach rip open and then pass wisecracks. They all thought this was strange. Considering the circumstances, you would be stunned,

you wouldn't pass comment. We brought it to a warmer level, but that coldness is part of it. It doesn't go as far as **Heavy Metal**, but it goes as far as it can. Ridley knew what he could get away with. This is one of the advantages Ridley has over Stanley Kubrick. Ridley was an art director. He brought British commercials to the standard of the highest acclaim in the world. He is capable of drawing. One of the in-jokes on the set was Ridley and his smoke gun. He kept adding it and adding it. The producers couldn't believe it; they thought he'd cracked.

What was your working relationship with Dan O'Bannon?

I don't know Dan O'Bannon very well. I like to think I get on well with most people, but there was a suspicion between us. Dan had never worked on a picture before in which one had to a certain extent conform. He was also not used to a shadow being next to the guy he always wanted to speak to, which was me. He must have thought I was a real hatchet man. I never really persuaded him to realize that I was as much a buff as he was. He's always remained faithful to Ridley. I think he is delighted that Ridley took the film way beyond his wildest dreams. Dan, as we all know, feels he was badly treated on **DARK STAR**. I think the last time I saw him, he was in a euphoric haze thinking about all the money that looks to be flooding in. That must help him live down **DARK STAR**.

Did you ever contribute to the plot or script of ALIEN in any way?

I can very discreetly claim some credit for the film's ending. In most forms, the ending of the script had Ripley in the shuttlecraft, leaning back in the chair relaxing, when suddenly the alien's hand appears over the back of the chair. She runs into the locker but the alien gets distracted by the cat box and begins ripping it to shreds. Ridley could never bring himself to film the Alien sequences in ways he'd done before. He always resisted that sort of shock effect, where a door opens and there's the alien. When Ridley had the idea of the alien coming down from above like a huge bat, that took the film up another notch for me, and that ending had the same kind of approach. They both fall out of the airlock, both hanging on a cord, Ripley scrambling to get in, the alien leaking acid everywhere. It gets its hand caught in the door as she closes it. You couldn't do that logically—the acid would eat through the airlock. So I said, what if the alien is like a chameleon, and he's going into another stage. Giger's concept was biomechanoid, so if you front lit the alien, so the audience could see it, but also not see it, that would be an amazing coup. I got team points for that idea, though the tragedy is that so few people realize it's there, amongst the machinery. There was also some contention as to whether the space jockey on the planet was the next form of the Alien, but it's a far better detail him being the victim. Ridley would like to return to that planet in the sequel. That's where the follow-up would begin logically—to investigate the inhabitants of the derelict ship that was attacked by the alien forms in those eggs.

Have you witnessed any audience reaction to the film?

We held a preview in Dallas. I shall never forget it. Several women hurtled themselves



Roger Dicken in his basement workshop, holding the "face hugger" (left) and "chest burster" (right).

out of the theatre during the "chest-burster" scene. When Ash gets his head taken off, one of the ushers fainted and knocked himself unconscious. There was panic among the Fox ranks: "Are we going to get lynched?" was the big question. I honestly don't think the film is the most violent or terrifying ever made, as there is only one show of blood and gore. It is intimidating and harrowing but that also has a lot to do with the sound and the editing. The film should definitely win an Oscar next year for editing. After the "chest-burster," the audience is definitely in a state of submission.

Scott's next project, TRISTAN AND ISEULT, has fantasy elements placing it in a category near ALIEN. Yet it won't be as coldly calculating as ALIEN?

The strength **TRISTAN** has is that the story has heart. After **THE DUELLISTS**, we were to launch **TRISTAN** immediately. I spent day after day in science fiction bookshops, raking in all sorts of pictorial stuff and information while Ridley drew up the storyboards. We were not having an easy time getting the screenplay for **TRISTAN** to the point where it worked right. We wanted a really classy, intelligent script on what is a very unique and difficult subject. Its plot is set in a no-time, no-place setting, which means science fiction, I suppose, but it's more sword and sorcery. You know, we get sent so many scripts, rip-offs of **LORD OF THE RINGS** and **STAR WARS**, and in all of them you don't give a damn about the characters or the situation. But **TRISTAN** has a very strong story and characters. Before Ridley decided to direct **ALIEN**, we presented Paramount with a half-completed **TRISTAN** screenplay, and they really didn't understand it. And at the time, Ridley didn't have the confidence to push it. Now, after **ALIEN**, he's beginning to realize what can be accomplished with special effects and models. And even there we scratched the surface, because **ALIEN** isn't an effects movie. It's a psychological film. "**JAWS** in space" really is an apt description. □

ROGER DICKEN

Creator of Small Alien Forms

"A fortune spent and I don't feel, after seeing the film, that it was warranted. What did you see of the alien? Nothing! If I had been left to my own devices, I certainly would have given them visually what you see now, and I'm sure a lot more. For all the aggravation involved, I think Fox blew it with their beast."

Roger Dicken describes himself as a loner. His other characteristics include being forthright and more than a trifle cynical about the industry he works in. As he says, "You spend so much time trying to get into the film industry, and then you spend so much time wanting to get out." Dicken is dedicated and serious about his craft, describing himself as a "simple effects man." He lives in a converted Gothic mansion called "Pellucidar," in a Berkshire village, and it's here among the wood-paneled rooms that he built the miniature alien forms for **ALIEN**. They now hang downstairs in his cellar-cum-workshop, between the octopus from **WAR-**

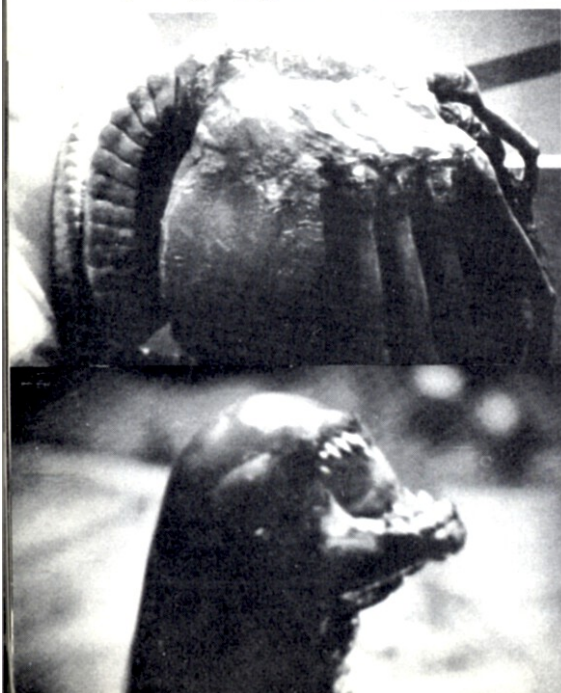
by Alan Jones

LORDS OF ATLANTIS and the skeleton of The Evil One he created for THE CREEPING FLESH.

Dicken was no more than a fan of model-making, and the producer of 8mm special effects epics, when he read that effects craftsman Ray Harryhausen would be in London to work on MYSTERIOUS ISLAND in 1960. After visiting with Harryhausen at his model animation studio, Dicken was convinced that he, "wanted to make monsters and get into the film business." First landing a job on Gerry Anderson's TV series THUNDERBIRDS, Dicken also worked on the feature film spin-off, THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO, as well as 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY ("Building ice cliffs and the lunar landscapes"), THE VAMPIRE BEAST CRAVES BLOOD, THE CONQUEROR WORM, SCARS OF DRACULA, and with Jim Danforth on WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH ("Jim and I hit it off straight from the start. I made the models for the film, working from Jim's designs, which is something I don't like to do today. He's a buff and so am I, and he was pleased to come to England and work with probably the only guy here who knew about everything that he did. I had great fun on that picture—both Jim and I do our work from the heart"). Producer John Dark came to him in 1975 and said he wanted to do THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT, but that he didn't want stop-motion animated dinosaurs. "I came up with the puppetized monsters for the film," says Dicken, "which John Dark liked. It's not the best process in the world, I'm the first to admit it; it's something that is involved purely with budget and time."

Recently, Dicken worked on ALIEN from February through early August of 1978, creating the small alien forms and making them come to life onscreen. "As my credit goes up on the screen," he says, "miniature alien creatures co-designed and made by Roger Dicken—it doesn't mention 'and activated by,' which I'm most annoyed about and have told Fox so. Nobody would know that I did special effects, too. I was under the lamps, sweating blood like everyone else. I

Roger Dicken's small alien forms, the "face hugger" (top) and "chest burster" (bottom).



was in the studio, I activated my monsters and should have credit to that effect."

Dicken is also not sincerely proud of the finished film: "As far as the completed ALIEN goes, it's very slick, but let's face it, everyone knows it's an expensively-made B movie plot. I couldn't identify with the characters at all. I thought the crew were so slovenly, they would never have gotten the craft off the ground in the first place. It doesn't say much for the American space program. It was all suspense, no pause, no backchat that made you care. You wanted one of the guys to pull out photographs of his kids." In addition, Dicken is not too personally satisfied with his own work on the film. "Ridley and Fox were happy with my work, but just because the film is a success doesn't mean I'm reversing my colors and jumping on the bandwagon of self-congratulation." Roger Dicken prefers the simple approach to effects work: "I don't believe in gears, hydraulic rams and pulleys. They can go wrong. Look at the egg in ALIEN. That was all gears, but for what you see of it, it could just as easily have been four wires pulling the flaps open."

Throughout the production of ALIEN, Dicken worked on all aspects of creating and motivating his 'small' aliens, of which he claims, "I've never spent so much time doing so little." He feels working on the film was quite trying, "a boardroom picture where nobody really knew what they wanted. Also, the atmosphere on the studio floor wasn't very nice." Dicken's "face-hugger" creature, which attaches itself to John Hurt's face (and was fastened to the actor's head with elastic bands), was based on an original design by scenarist/visual design consultant Dan O'Bannon. "I think I made it on the table in my lounge," says Dicken. "Ridley Scott came up [to Dicken's studio-home] quite a few times to make suggestions about altering it, but basically the fingers-on-the-side was O'Bannon's idea. In the scene where it's examined, [special effects supervisor] Nick Allder's effects boys supplied it with guts from the abattoir." For the scene of the "face-hugger's" finger getting sliced open, Dicken constructed six spare 'arms,' hollow, with tubes in them, blocked off at the tip. An extension piece was added so the liquid could be squirted down. "I went to the studio quite a few weeks before that scene was shot," explained Dicken, "rigged up a fake piece of metal girder, and an alien 'leg,' for a demonstration for the producers. I cut it, liquid squirted out, and this 'metal girder' bubbled and melted. They were knocked out by it, but I didn't get to do that shot in the film. What you see in that scene as it is now looks like cellulose thinners thrown onto what appears to be polystyrene. You don't really get the feeling that the 'blood' is melting metal." Although Dicken is primarily responsible for the "face-hugger" model, he did not have anything to do with its initial exit from the alien egg, or in the scene of it falling onto Sigourney Weaver's shoulder near the auto-doc.

The secondary alien form, the "chest-burster," which explodes from Kane's body, was built by Dicken from a design suggested to him by director Ridley Scott. "Ridley decided the 'chest-burster' should look something like the Giger drawing with the elongated head," says Dicken. The creature

was tried with all sorts of variations: without eyes, with eyes, with tails. Dicken fiddled around with sticking the tail on the head, trying it without arms, with legs, eventually coming up with something the producers liked. Its arms came off, and Scott wanted the body to have spastic-like lumps; also, to make it look as lifelike as possible. "I made it breathe by installing gills and a chest that was inflated up and down." As the large alien came equipped with those huge metallic teeth, Dicken had to fashion some chromium dentures for the smaller version, which were snapped onto the monster's porpoise-like face.

As for making the "chest-burster" move, Dicken was set up underneath John Hurt and the spot where the beast would chew its way out of Hurt's false chestpiece. Dicken moved the model, while other effects technicians operated the creature's gills and other dribble gadgets meant to simulate the grisly death scene. For the shot when the creature makes its exit, the dinner table was split in two, the side to the camera being higher than the other. Special effects men built a trolley for Dicken to lie down upon, which was yanked across, underneath the table, as Dicken worked the model across the tabletop. "I made a tail with a tube inside it," says Dicken, "and [effects technician] Allan Bryce connected it up to an air bottle for me. I had the tail taped down around my hand, and when the compressed air was turned on, it made the tail thwack around. We did three takes on the whole scene."

Fox executives think the "chest-burster" is the most realistic creature Dicken has ever made. "Personally, I don't feel that," laments Dicken. "I've no real love for the work I did on that film at all. The only reason Fox thinks the way they do is because the effect was involved with animal flesh and blood in such a close shot with the actor. It looks more realistic than it actually is. If I'd had my way, the creature would have literally pulled himself out of the torso. Not a shock cut, and nothing terribly gratuitous, but a shot of his little hands coming out and pulling himself up. That would have been much more horrifying."

Dicken was originally to do the big alien, but decisions on how it should look dragged on and, according to Dicken, "they [the producers] didn't know what they wanted. For instance, first they said no tail on the alien, but then in the end it had one!" He sent a letter to the producers explaining that he no longer wished to be involved on the full-size alien. "Pandemonium broke out," says Dicken. "They said I was letting the picture down. But I told them honestly, that I wasn't going to give myself a nervous breakdown making a creature when I had no idea exactly what I was trying to make." Dicken was replaced by, as he describes it, "a whole team," led by H. R. Giger and Carlo Rambaldi. "Rambaldi did the head, but I heard a rumor that someone was building another head in Europe in case his didn't work out. A fortune spent and I don't feel, after seeing the film, that it was warranted. What did you see of the alien? Nothing! If I had been left to my own devices, I certainly would have given them visually what you see now, and I'm sure a lot more. For all the aggravation involved, I think Fox blew it with their beast." □

H. R. GIGER

Alien Design

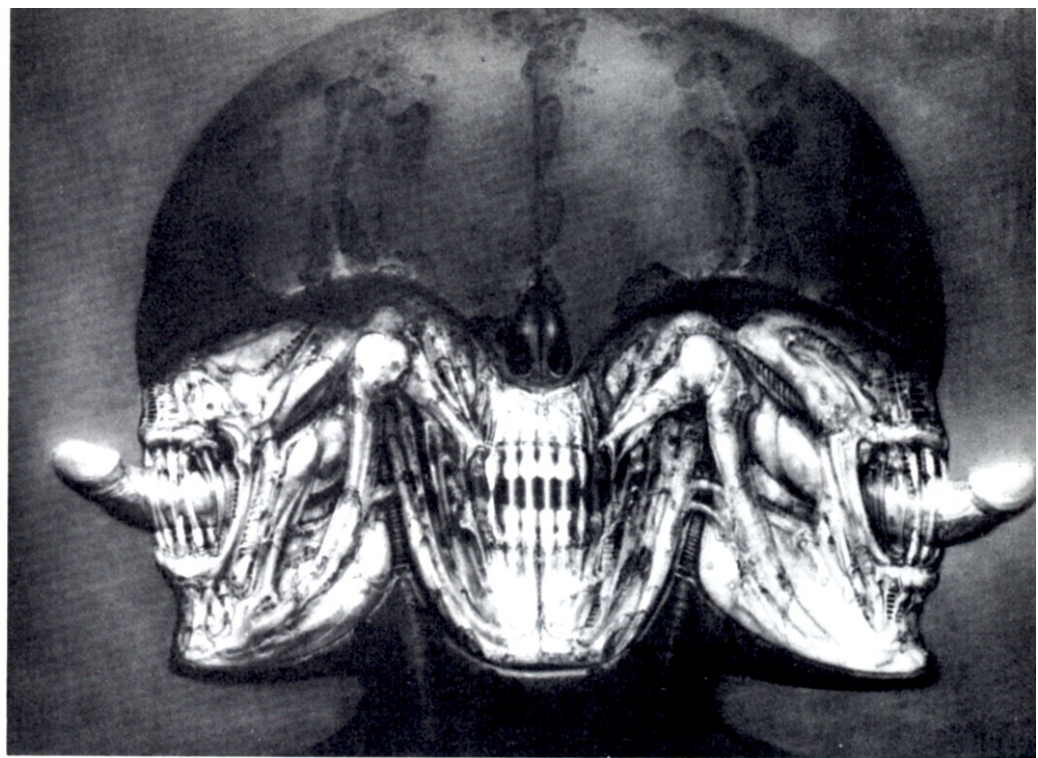
"I think that, for an artist, film is the most terrific medium. I like seeing my work in three dimensions."

Many articles published in the press said that Giger had horrible nightmares while working on ALIEN, because he was haunted by the monster. "That's pure rubbish," says Michele, dubbed Mia, Giger's secretary-girlfriend-model-muse. "But one thing is true," she says, "He used to have nightmares and would even talk in his sleep because of the terrible pressure imposed on him by the production." Joining the ALIEN team must have brought, indeed, quite a new pace to Giger's life. For not only is his home situated in a particularly quiet district of Zurich, it is also conceived, 'designed,' as an isolated place. Very few windows, if any, especially in the atelier, and one dominant color: black. Giger and Mia are dressed in black. The ceiling is painted black, and so is the furniture. The walls of the living room offer lighter hues, however, as they are the support of Giger's most famous paintings, like *The Spell*.

Despite this *Necronomicon's* decor, and though he confesses with a smile he wouldn't want to belong in his paintings as a character, Giger's declared aim is not to disturb people, but to give them peace. He is rather a nice person who often laughs and smiles. At the time of our interview in July, Giger was busy preparing the publication of Giger's ALIEN, largely based on Mia's photographs taken on the set. This report and analysis of Giger's part in the making of ALIEN will be published in November by Big O Publishing, London, in association with Sphinx Verlag, Basel.

Giger was brought into ALIEN by Dan O'Bannon, probably O'Bannon's greatest contribution to the project. Giger had met O'Bannon once, briefly, in Paris, while both worked for Alexandro Jodorowsky on his aborted film of Frank Herbert's DUNE. Says Giger, "I haven't been contacted by Jodorowsky since. He just sent back my slides and sketches, but never paid me for them!" O'Bannon called Giger from Los Angeles in August 1977 and asked him to design the monsters for ALIEN. "He promised to pay me in advance," laughs Giger, "so I agreed. I made three paintings and some sketches, based on the story he told me over the phone. I liked it particularly because I found it was in the vein of Lovecraft, one of my greatest

by Frederic Albert Levy



About The Cover

Our cover reproduces only a portion of Necronomicon II (shown above), a 70x100 cm painting made by Giger in 1976 and published in H. R. Giger's Necronomicon, the book which served as director Ridley Scott's inspiration for ALIEN. The artwork suggests the gaping jaws of horror, and seemingly eye-less, dome-headed visage which developed into the film's Alien. The side views suggest the action of the protruding tongue and the appearance of the jaw musculature developed by Carlo Rambaldi. Says Giger, "Ridley Scott often referred to my Necronomicon book to show people how they should work."

sources of inspiration. In the beginning, for example, the eggs were in an old pyramid. But the producers didn't believe in me yet. Someone reportedly said, 'There are fifty Gigers around town.' Only when Ridley Scott was chosen to direct did I become really involved—he had been fascinated by my book *Necronomicon*." On February 8, 1978, Scott met Giger at his home in Zurich, and the artist began his design work for the picture in earnest, later traveling to Shepperton Studios in London to work intensively on the film's sets, miniatures and special effects.

"As for DUNE," says Giger, "I haven't given up on the project. Dino DeLaurentiis contacted me to design some creatures for his FLASH GORDON. I turned the offer down, because I do not know the world of FLASH GORDON very well, and because I just couldn't start working on a new film right away, after the exhausting experience of ALIEN. But I let him know that I would be interested in participating in his production of DUNE, now that he has acquired the rights, and is said to be looking for a director to start filming next year."

What elements in the film did you design?

I designed the alien planet, the landscape, which I made out of a mixture of bones, tubes, technical stuff, in order to achieve what I call my *biomechanics*. I made the derelict spacecraft, interior and exterior, the cockpit, and under this derelict ship, the egg silo. Originally, as I told you before, the story

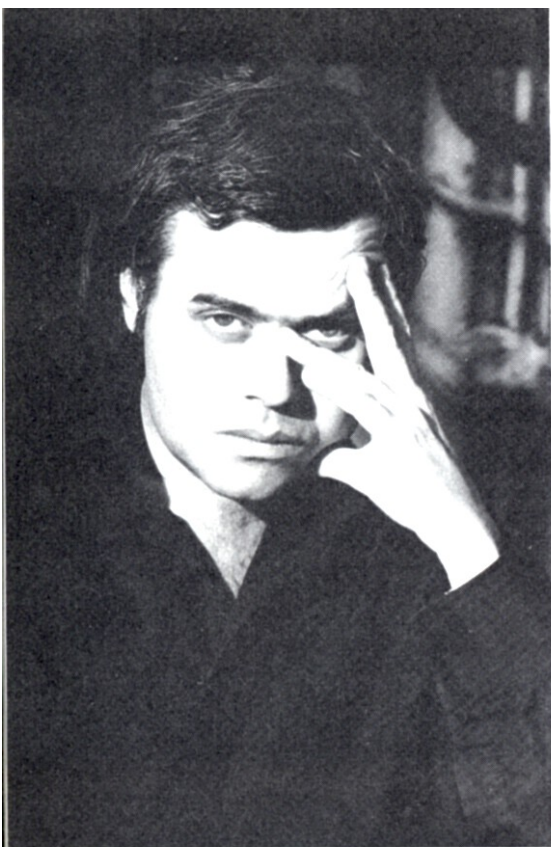
was different and the eggs were in a pyramid. But this was thought too close to the Egyptian myths, and we had to combine the derelict ship and the hatchery silo. I thought we could place the egg silo under the ship, a bit like termites do. I also made the egg, and the cocoon. But the cocoon ended up on the cutting room floor.

I designed the three alien forms: the "face hugger" [which attaches to John Hurt's head], the "chest burster" and the big alien. I gave the first one a tail the shape of a spring, because its function commanded that it could jump out at the face, and also two hands so it could grab a hold of the head. Ridley Scott took some inspiration for the second beast from a painting by Francis Bacon, where the face of a character is limited to a mouth, as this second alien has literally to eat its way out of the chest. The big problem was that of the monster. More often than not, in horror films, they show the monster for much too long, and once you have seen it, you can leave the theatre. There is no point in watching on. And Ridley Scott would often say, "I don't want to have a movie monster." So we decided to show the monster very briefly, detail by detail, reserving a full view for the end. Otherwise, the film may well have been dull.

Was the idea of showing the monster only fleetingly due to any aesthetic conception of yours?

No, that played no part in the decision; I give a "full view" of my monsters in my paintings. It was not conditioned by the story, either, as, when at one point a character is killed by the alien, he can see him completely. But I totally agree with this 'cover-up' policy. I had very long discussions with Ridley Scott, and for us, the monster undoubtedly was the most important aspect of the film. We decided not to show him, in order to keep some tension in the spectator. To create a final surprise. And I have heard that some people went to see ALIEN up to six times with the mere purpose of figuring out, of seeing what the monster is like.

Did you work personally as much on the alien which attaches to John Hurt's face as on the full-



H. R. Giger

grown alien?

No, that was mainly Roger Dicken's work. I had made a plaster-cast for this alien at the same time he made one. But I did not go on with my work on that. I simply did not have the time.

Did you work with Dicken at all?

No, I didn't work with him. Originally, he wanted to build the monster; but when I saw the kind of things he had done, I thought he couldn't do the monster, and I decided that I should build it myself. Roger Dicken is very gifted for models of real, or rather, known animals, such as dinosaurs, but not for imaginary creatures. Let's say, at least, that in this domain, he does not work in my direction. I must say, at the beginning, I was not too satisfied with his work, but, with director Ridley Scott, I supervised him, and I was finally entirely happy with what he turned out. He worked from my drawings, and I met with him quite a few times, with director Ridley Scott, but what we may have done together was nothing more than corrections. He also made the "chest burster," and his experience enabled him to achieve very good results for the animation of this third monster, mostly air-controlled.

How did Carlo Rambaldi become involved with the "Alien Head Effects"?

After STAR WARS, everybody was busy and working on different films, and they just could not find a monster-maker for ALIEN. Finally, producer Gordon Carroll came up with Carlo Rambaldi, who worked on KING KONG, and who brilliantly devised the mechanical apparatus to animate the mouth I had designed for this monster. He did most of his work in Los Angeles, but flew over to Shepperton for a week, during which time we worked together in close collaboration. We devised the muscles for the mouth of the monster. Originally, we wanted to make it transparent but we couldn't get the manufacturing facilities, and had to make do with

the plaster shop. But I insist that I made the monster myself. I used a kind of skull to represent the sexual organ. It all depends on how you look at it.

Did you do any work in collaboration with Carlo DeMarchis and Dr. David Watling, credited for "additional alien mechanics"?

Carlo DeMarchis was one of Carlo Rambaldi's assistants. When I modelled the alien's head, he made about six copies in polyester, which he sent to Rambaldi in Los Angeles so that he could work out the inside mechanism. And when Rambaldi came over to Shepperton for a week, DeMarchis helped him put the parts of the mechanism together. David Watling was asked to make another head, for reasons of security, but we didn't have to use it.

What materials did you use to make the alien? And, did you have any assistants?

I used quite a lot of materials: polyester, rubber, animal meat, real bones, and oysters. I was helped by Peter Boysey, who was very good. I'd say he was the best of all the modelers who worked on the film.

What about the metal jaws? What inspired those?

I did that myself, too. Those teeth are also in polyester. They were chrome-plated, so as to give them a metallic shine. I imagined them that way because for me the monster is both human and mechanical—more human than mechanical, though. So giving him steel teeth was a way to convey this two-fold nature.

How did you deal with the fact that a real actor was playing the alien? Was it easy for him to get into and out of the 'suit' you designed?

The making of this 'suit' was certainly one of the most complicated things to achieve. We took a plaster-cast of the whole body of actor Bolaji Badejo. Then, from this cast, we made a kind of statue, upon which I put tubes, bones, etc. to obtain the shape of the monster. Then a rubber mold was made out of this statue-with-accessories. And only then, finally, from this rubber mold, was the suit proper realized. Badejo, in fact, was not the only one to don this unusual type of clothes; it's him you see when the monster walks, but when the monster comes down from the ceiling, the man in the suit is a stuntman. Anyway, for both of them, getting 'dressed' was a terrible ordeal. It took them at least an hour to get ready. The stuntman, especially, didn't have a good time in the scene where he is hanging, or you'd better say, 'is hung' from the ceiling. He couldn't see a thing, and he had to move by following instructions shouted up to him! These sufferings the stuntman and an actor standing in for Harry Dean Stanton had to endure for the two weeks it took to film the scene.

Who controlled the movements of the tail?

That is a special effect. The original idea was to have a mechanized tail. But that would not work. So a 'normal' tail was used instead, and animated with a system of wires which, hopefully, the spectator cannot see!

What was your inspiration for the design of the egg?

The egg is related to my work insofar as it is an element essential to art nouveau, of which, in a way, I am a representative. In O'Bannon's script, the top of the egg wasn't organic, but completely mechanical. I didn't like it that way. So I built up this egg with a top

like a vagina. But when the producers turned up in my studio, they exclaimed, 'Oh, that's too specific! We can't show such things in Catholic countries. Can't you change the egg just a little bit?' So to satisfy Catholic audiences, I modified the egg, and made the opening a cross on the top. I like the opening of the egg in the film. They used real meat from a slaughterhouse, mmmm.

How come the producers never objected to the Alien's head being the shape of a penis? Or is this perhaps why the creature is shown so briefly?

Any long thing is phallic, in a way, and what you say for the head is not so obvious as the vagina was for the egg! There was no censorship whatever about it, and I repeat that the Alien is shown very briefly because it was Ridley Scott and Hans Giger's idea, not anybody else's.

Did you work with supervising model makers Martin Bower or Bill Pearson on the derelict spacecraft miniature?

No, they belonged to Ron Cobb's team, in charge of the making of the Nostromo. And that's just one thing I should like to point out: I went my own way to make the derelict (and it's no coincidence if it looks like my paintings), and Ron Cobb went his own way for the Nostromo. These two tasks were entrusted to two different artists so the two ships should look totally different, giving the impression they came from two different civilizations. The derelict had to appear as a non-human construction—so I did it!

Are you ever disappointed that, because of the cuts, this feeling of another civilization does not really come through in the scenes of the planet?

I am a bit disappointed, but I think the film comes off alright as it is now. We had made a lot of little models, but very few were actually executed full-size. And, due to lack of time, the one made for the landscape is not really biomechanic. But, at least, it is full-size. Only in one scene is a model used for the landscape: when you see the three men with the derelict in the background.

Can you tell us about SWISS MADE, the science fiction film you worked on before ALIEN?

SWISS MADE was filmed in 1969 by F. Murer, with a very small crew. The picture is distributed here by a firm called Nemo. But the story is so complicated I can only give you the main lines. An extraterrestrial comes to Earth with his extraterrestrial dog. The dog is wearing some clothes, which indicate how polluted our atmosphere is. I used a real dog, and I made the clothes in polyester. With a camera the alien has instead of eyes and a tape recorder he has in his chest, he records everything he comes across. But he is arrested by security people, who take him to a hospital. All these events are seen through his camera, in a subjective way. I think he dies at the end, but I'm not sure. He is examined by the people in the hospital, but when they turn his limbs, they discover there is nothing there! It was filmed in 35mm. The story, somewhat in the vein of Orwell's 1984, is very complex. It is in fact the combination of seven different stories, none of which are told entirely!

You were an industrial designer, originally. Could you tell us what led you to the cinema, and was that industrial training useful for ALIEN?

In Switzerland, the word 'artist' is not taken seriously. If you're an artist, you do not have a real profession over here; you must be

one of those guys who just drink too much and play around. But mind you, even in Los Angeles or at Shepperton they were surprised that a Swiss could be something other than a cheese-eater or watchmaker. Anyway, my father insisted that I have a true profession. So I looked for something where I could do some drawings. I learned architectural design first, and then attended courses in a Zurich school where you are taught photography, and all forms of design. I more or less specialized in interior architecture. This training gave me the capacity of translating my designs into three dimensions; I got used to working with plastics, for instance. And all this turned out to be very useful for ALIEN.

Your designs, as a painter, are immobile. How did you deal with the fact that your pictures, here, would be part of a moving picture?

As an industrial designer, I always consider what kind of function an object has. If you look at an object, its form should be enough to tell you about its function. That's the way I work. Admittedly, the difficulties you come across when you realize a normal, an 'ordinary' painting (shadows, lines, etc.), multiply in an incredible way as soon as you know you have to move it. That's why the director had to concentrate on the monster first, as it was to be the most difficult thing to show.

Did you have any influence on the script?

Not really, but on many occasions I insisted that the visual aspect of the film should come first because, for me, a film like this needs a succession of very strong impressions. Ridley Scott is, like me, a very 'visual' man, and we had to fight together against screenwriter Dan O'Bannon quite a few times. O'Bannon kept saying it wouldn't work if some points of the script were dropped. He once said, for example, that because of the script, the hatchery could not contain more than six eggs. And I had to convince him that a hatchery with six eggs was preposterous. Also, I had to change the spacecraft once without being given any specific reason. Very often you are confronted with a lot of people totally impervious to artistic viewpoints.

Do you establish a hierarchy in your different types of work, and what place is occupied by your film work?

I don't draw any lines, actually. The cinema forces me to create in new domains.

"I insisted that the visual aspect of ALIEN should come first, because a film like this needs a succession of very strong impressions. Like me, Ridley Scott is a very 'visual' man, and we had to fight together against Dan O'Bannon quite a few times, as he kept saying the film wouldn't work if some points of the script were dropped. Very often you are confronted with people totally impervious to artistic viewpoints."

For instance, I had never designed a spacecraft before ALIEN.

You very often mix elements of different epochs in your painting—machine guns unscrupulously gang up with antique cathedrals, etc. How did you approach the question of Time in ALIEN? Would you call it a science fiction film?

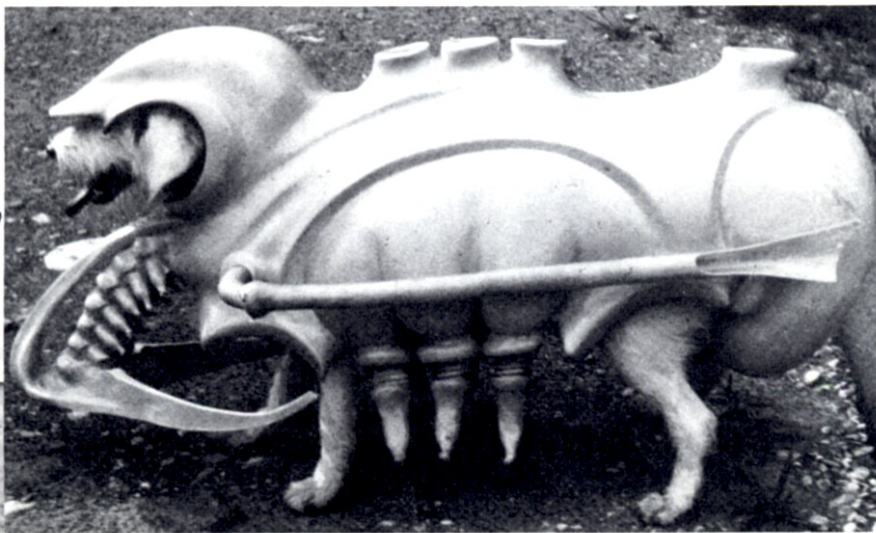
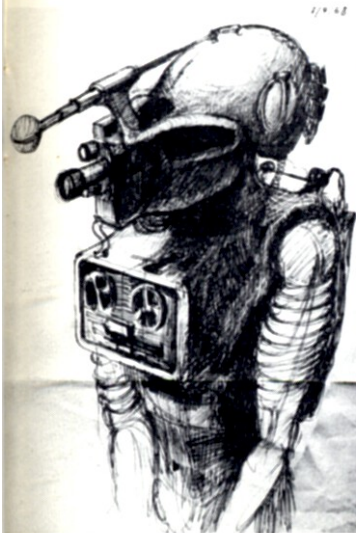
It is a kind of science fiction film, but for me, it's more a horror film. Ridley Scott called it a gothic novel, and he often referred to my Necronomicon book to show people how they should work. "Moebius" [Jean Giraud, another member of the DUNE nucleus] did the designs for the astronauts. They wear a kind of Japanese armor and helmets which could belong to just about any period of time. Space, here, is just a means to express a feeling of claustrophobia.

Outer space and claustrophobia seem to be a very odd couple.

The events of the film take place inside the spacecraft, mostly. Little time is devoted to the planet, not more than twenty minutes. ALIEN is about the situation of people locked together inside a very limited space. They would like to escape, but they can't. Claustrophobia was already there, in the script, but it just falls in with my own personal fantasies. As a boy, I would dream every night that I was in a white room, from which I could escape only through a small hole in the ceiling. But even when I had managed to reach this hole, I was stuck inside the wall and couldn't

Swiss Made 2069

Giger made this dog creature and alien for the Swiss moviemaker F. M. Murer in 1969, for a 45-minute color short, filmed in 35mm, with an optical soundtrack.





breathe. I freed myself from these obsessions when I began painting my *Passages*.

How many designs did you do for ALIEN?

About thirty-five. But some of them were just guides for the matte artist [Roy Cagle, who painted the matte element of the long shot of Kane (John Hurt) descending into the mammoth hatchery beneath the alien ship]. I had a photograph of my drawing blown-up, and then showed the matte painter how to work. I also did a lot of paintings. As to how much time I spent on all this ALIEN work, I couldn't say. Quite a long time, really, including more than five months at Shepperton Studios.

What matters most to me is that this film enabled me to go beyond what I usually do, to live a new experience. Like Cocteau, I hate being limited to a particular genre. And that's why I am preparing a very precise report on my various activities during the film, which will be published in book form as *Giger's ALIEN*.

What do you think of the current science fiction craze, and, if this book is titled Giger's ALIEN, in what way is the film yours? And what is your relationship with the public, now that you've done ALIEN? Before, you were Hans Giger, the painter.

Obviously, ALIEN has brought me a lot of publicity! Nowadays I think people like science fiction the same way they take, or would like to take drugs or whatever to escape from reality. People need science fiction because it makes them happy. It shows them to areas they would be too afraid to explore otherwise. Many people find my designs horrible at first. But if they look at them a little longer, they eventually accept that world they had not seen before, and admit there is some harmony to it. It's just another kind of peace, but not so well-known. I don't want to instill trouble into people's minds. I don't appreciate that kind of science fiction where every element is invented. That's why I wanted the landscape of the planet in the film to be *biomechanic*, a mixture of our technology and some kind of magma, so as to create the feeling that maybe something has happened before on that planet, maybe a technical civilization has been destroyed. Unfortunately, as most of the landscape footage has been cut by Ridley Scott, I doubt whether

Derelict Ship

Right: H. R. Giger's painting of the derelict alien starship, which the crew of the Nostromo discover is the source of the distress signal which has diverted them from their course.

Left Inset: The large scale miniature of the ship (approximately 9 feet wide, 13 feet long and 5 feet high) constructed from Giger's design in the model shop at Shepperton Studios.

Giger incorporated his concept of biomechanics, an artistic melding of technology with nature, in his design for the ship and the planet's surface. The film is like a Giger canvas come to life.



all that can be felt anymore.

I will call my book *Giger's ALIEN* because I like to think my *biomechanics* could be the new style for this century. I'd like to invent a new architecture for this century.

You said that after ALIEN you were not in a hurry to embark on a new film. Why?

I sincerely hope that I can work on De-Laurentiis' DUNE, because I like the book very much, and I understand that Frank Herbert would like to do the screenplay himself. For me, that could be a new incentive to work out new concepts and elaborate new directions. You see, I have accumulated a lot of skeletons in this house recently, and they are just waiting to be transformed into pieces of furniture. I have some designs, for instance, for a bed which would be composed mainly of skulls. Perhaps a film version of DUNE could be an excellent avenue for such ideas. But I doubt whether the contents of the DUNE trilogy could be put into one film, and think that two or three films should be made. The task, anyway, will be a difficult one.

Do you still like the cinema? As a spectator, I mean?

The last film I have seen is one of the greatest films I have ever seen. It's called ERASER-

HEAD; unfortunately, it seems to be presented in New York City only, as a Friday night late show. I also never forget that I got my first fantastic impressions while seeing Jean Cocteau's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, or, rather, stills taken from the film, published in an issue of Life magazine circa 1945. American soldiers had brought us chewing gum and Life magazines. I was five years old then. And, as a matter of fact, many of my designs could be called "Beauty and the Beast."

There is, indeed, a female face in practically all your paintings. But I see no beauty in ALIEN, just a Beast.

Who knows? The Beast might well be the Beauty! For me, it was a hybrid. But Timothy Leary, in the preface he has written for *Giger's ALIEN*, assumes that the creature is a woman.

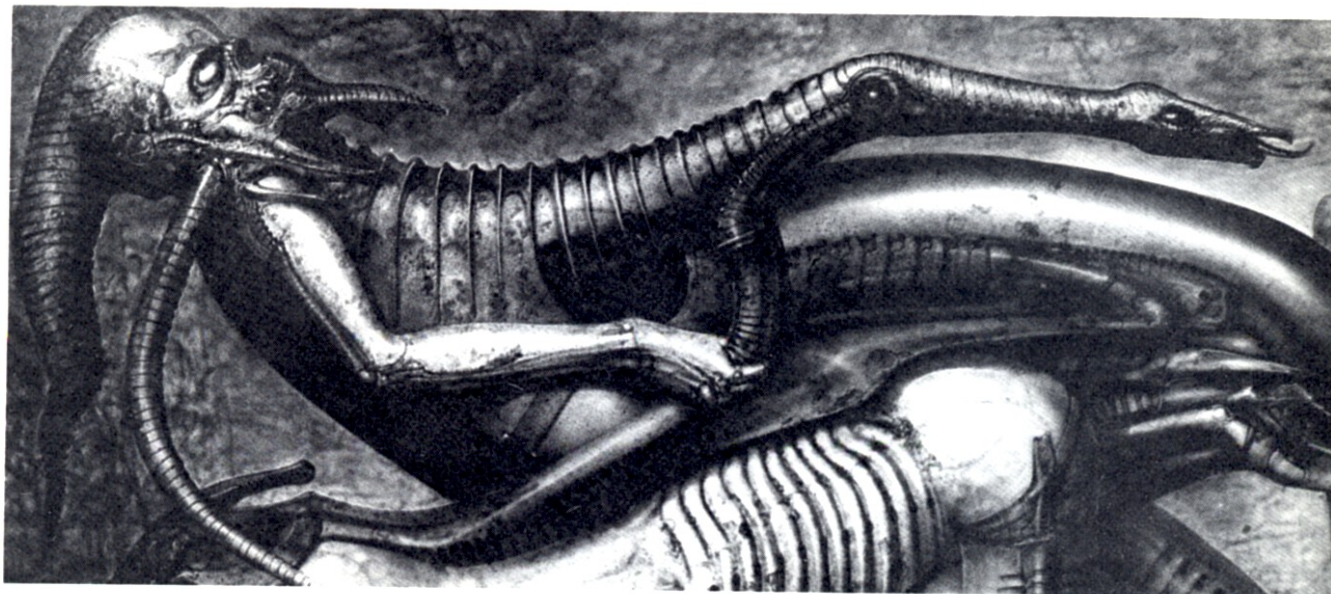
Do you believe that ALIEN will impress some people the way that Cocteau's images impressed you?

No, I think not, because ALIEN contains too much reality to conceal something in the background. It may pertain to art for some of its details, but on the whole it is essentially an entertainment film—but a very successful entertainment film.

Frederic Albert Levy

Space Jockey

Left: H. R. Giger climbs over the full-size model of the "Space Jockey" he built on the soundstages of Shepperton Studios, making any last-minute final touches prior to filming. Giger built this fossilized space traveler, who has become part of his chair, out of fiberglass and plasticene, with a base of plaster. Right: The concept was derived, like that of the Alien, from a painting (Necronom V, 100x150 centimeters, painted in 1976) that director Ridley Scott was drawn to in Giger's Necronomicon. The detail shown at right is only a small part of a much larger canvas.



THE SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA

“...shows what screen fantasy is capable of.”

THE SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA A Dynamite Entertainment release. 6/79 (c73). 83(89) minutes. In color. Produced by Don Houghton and Vee King Shaw. Directed by Roy Ward Baker. Screenplay by Houghton. Directors of Photography, John Wilcox and Roy Ford. Music by James Bernard. Musical supervisor, Philip Martell. Edited by Chris Barnes. Assistant to producer, Chris Carreras. Martial Arts sequences staged by Tang Chia and Liu Chia-Liang. Special effects by Les Bowie. Production manager, Chua Lan. Art director, Johnson Tsau. Makeup by We Hsu Ching. Assistant director, Erh Feng.

Van Helsing	Peter Cushing
Hsi Ching	David Chiang
Vanessa Buren	Julie Ege
Leyland Van Helsing	Robin Stewart
Mai Kwei	Shin Szu
Dracula	John Forbes-Robertson
British Consul	Robert Hanna
Kah	Chan Shen

Even in 1973, when production on **THE LEGEND OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES** began, the idea of combining the gothic vampire movie with the kung-fu genre seemed, at best, amusing. At worst, it signalled the final deterioration of the once exciting Hammer Dracula series. **THE LEGEND OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES** is a Hammer-Shaw Brothers co-production, released and retitled (**THE SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA**) by the same distributor (Max J. Rosenberg's Dynamite Entertainment) who last year picked up Hammer's **SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA** and released it as **COUNT DRACULA AND HIS VAMPIRE BRIDES**.

The film opens with a lengthy, visually splendid montage depicting the initial attack by the vampires on a rural Chinese village, the defeat of one of them by an elderly peasant whose daughter has been held captive, and their revival by Count Dracula, his spirit occupying the body of a Chinese shaman foolish enough to enter his castle. This sequence has been chopped up by Rosenberg to serve as both the credits' backdrop (broken by freeze frames), the opening scene, and (apparently) a flashback. In any case, however confusing the struc-

by Bill Kelley

ture may be for the first couple of minutes, it is certainly a breathtaking introduction. The sequence employs virtually no dialogue and contains requisite instances of gore and violence. But it is staged with such confidence and vitality that the images of vampires sweeping through the fog-shrouded village on horseback have a haunting beauty apart from their horrific quality.

But all of this is just an extended prologue to the entrance of Van Helsing (a solid performance by Peter Cushing). Though older now, the vampire-hunter is as keen and alert as ever. Preparing to leave China after a disastrous university lecture, he is approached by the grandson of the old man who vanquished the seventh vampire. His sister and six brothers—all martial arts experts—are determined to purge their village of the vampires once and for all; and they require Van Helsing's help. At this point, fifteen minutes into the movie, the smooth, fairytale quality of the narrative is disrupted by the introduction of two stock Hammer elements: the young, dumb male lead (in this case, Van Helsing's son, played by the stilted Robin Stewart) and an extraneous love interest. In a mild twist, the love angle gets reversed so the blonde, British leading lady (Julie Ege), originally paired off with Stewart, falls for the Oriental hero (kung-fu idol David Chiang). This touch, Stewart's miserable performance, and the fact that he has little to do during the kung-fu sequences, practically phases him out of the picture—which is just as well, since Houghton's script has missed every chance to explore the relationship between the young Van Helsing and his father.

Most of the movie, in fact, is set up to place Van Helsing and his fellow travelers in as many perilous situations as possible, prompting several elaborate and savage demonstrations of kung-fu. The whole film could have collapsed at this point, but the fight sequences are expertly staged (by Shaw martial arts trainers) and, as the heroes get closer to the cursed village, some of the vampires join in the fray, spicing up the action with the supernatural. These creatures, with black, soulless eyes, rotting faces (partially

concealed by masks), and long, skeletal fingers, constitute the film's most frightening aspect, largely because their actions are completely unpredictable. Few of even the most famous Hammer films are genuinely scary—more often they are simply very exciting. And while **SEVEN BROTHERS MEET DRACULA** falls back on numerous Hammer trademarks (a sloppy but effective James Bernard score, several disintegrations), its strength is in its adventurous detachment from most of the cliches of the gothic horror genre (a cameo Dracula appearance turns out to be the least of its horror devices). The vampires' powers are a synthesis of Eastern warrior discipline and conventional vampire lore.

The eeriest sequences in the film exemplify the audience's feeling of helplessness for the characters and their dire predicaments. Early on, the grandfather of the seven brothers—whose daughter has been kidnapped by the undead—leaves the village and walks cautiously down a windswept, woodland road. At first, what we hear sounds like nothing more than the night wind. It grows louder, more shrill, until we recognize the distant screams of women. The old man rounds a bend in the road, coming upon a huge pagoda—the source of the screams. Baker's control of this starkly cinematic interlude is surprisingly deft (such fleeting subtlety is rare in a seventies Hammer film), so much so that one could hardly blame him if, once the man enters the pagoda, the rest of the sequence is a letdown. Inside the pagoda, their bodies stripped to various stages of semi-nudity, are the abducted village women. Strapped to wooden ramps in a circle, their blood is drained into a bubbling cauldron. It goes without saying that these bloodsuckers are about as far as possible from Christopher Lee's charismatic sensuality.

Indeed, it is the attempt to weave Dracula into this film that strikes as its one thoroughly sour note. Lee, originally to guest star as Dracula, was replaced by John Forbes-Robertson, who looks somewhat like Lee in but one scene, the climactic battle with Cushing. Forbes-Robertson would probably be acceptable, did he not overact so dreadfully, particularly in delivering long, drawn-out speeches.

The narrative success of this film is attributable mostly to Baker, who integrates vampire movie conventions with the martial arts material. And as in his one prior Dracula film for Hammer, the failed **SCARS OF DRACULA** (in which he dipped into Bram Stoker's novel for Dracula's scaling of the castle wall), Baker introduces one "classical" touch: Dracula bolting upright from his coffin, a visual reference to Murnau's **NOSFERATU** (1922). **SEVEN BROTHERS** doesn't completely overcome the restrictions of the exploitation format. But in those moments when the film truly springs to life, it shows what screen fantasy is capable of. □

MOONRAKER

“...it offers glossy entertainment without pretensions...”

MOONRAKER United Artists release. 6/79. In Technicolor, Panavision, 70mm and Dolby stereo. 126 minutes. Produced by Albert R. Broccoli. Directed by Lewis Gilbert. Screenplay by Christopher Wood, based on the story by Ian Fleming. Music by John Barry. Executive Producer, Michael G. Wilson. Director of Photography, Jean Tournier. Visual effects supervisor, Derek Meddings. Production designed by Ken Adam. Edited by John Glen. Special Effects by John Evans and John Richardson.

James Bond	Roger Moore
Holly Goodhead	Lois Chiles
Drax	Michael Lonsdale
Jaws	Richard Kiel
Corinne Dufour	Corinne Clery
"M"	Bernard Lee
Frederick Gray	Geoffrey Keen
"Q"	Desmond Llewelyn
Moneypenny	Lois Maxwell
Manuela	Emily Bolton
Chang	Toshiro Suga

While the days of the series films seem to have all but disappeared, one still remains: James Bond. Since the character's first screen appearance in **DR. NO** (1962), eleven Bond epics have kept 007's continuing story alive. The suave secret agent has changed over the years, from the cynical, deadly portrayals of Sean Connery to the nice-guy image generated by Roger Moore. The plots, which were essential to the first couple of Bond films, have long since taken a back seat to the action, and the tongue-in-cheek sexual/sadistic humor has become more prominent as the screen Bond progresses. As such, the latest in the series, **MOONRAKER**, is one of best action-comedies of the year.

This production is even more akin to Forties matinee serials than its predecessors. Bond's incredible escapes from cliffhanger action (pushed from a plane without a parachute, going over a raging waterfall in a speedboat and being attacked by a giant anaconda) highlight the otherwise episodic sequences among which the thread of a plot is easily lost. Everything we've come to expect in one of these films is on view, and in abundance. The magnificent Ken Adam sets, spectacular action which includes a laser battle in space, a bizarre villain bent on world domination and, of course, the ever-available, beautiful and always disposable Bond women. Lois Chiles, the latest in an impressive list of Bondian heroines, plays Dr. Holly Goodhead, a CIA agent working on recovering the missing Moonraker shuttle "lost" (actually hijacked in mid-air) during the pre-credits sequence. Corinne Clery, in a role closely approximating that of Shirley Eaton's in **GOLDFINGER**, is most memorable and her quick death early in the film leaves an unfortunate blank space in the remainder of the movie.

MOONRAKER is nothing more than a conglomeration of all that has gone before. The climactic battle is a space version of the underwater fight in **THUNDER-**

by Dan Scapperotti

Van Helsing (Peter Cushing) and kung-fu vampires.



BALL; the boat chase is a reprise of that in FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE; and the gondola-car is a reversal of an idea used in THE SPY WHO LOVED ME. MOONRAKER does precious little to add any originality to the James Bond myth or the long string of violent clashes. The results, however silly and convoluted, are notoriously good fun. Roger Moore's Bond characterization, responsible for the lighter tone of the last two films, is unable to carry the film, weighed down as it is in non-stop action. Wildly improbable chases and battles, along with scenarist Wood's ability to milk one-liners out of any situation, holds this film together.

007, assigned to investigate the disappearance of the space shuttle, tracks down one Hugo Drax, owner of a vast industrial complex which manufactured the shuttle. The egomaniac Drax is intent on destroying the world's population through the use of a nerve gas which kills intelligent life, while leaving other animal and plant life intact—"One must preserve the balance of nature," intones Drax. Once clear of all human debris, Drax intends to repopulate the earth with his followers, who remain safe aboard his space station hovering over earth.

James Bond's quips, which someday must be catalogued alongside those of Charlie Chan, are witty and endless and rapid-fired for the audience's enlightenment. Arriving at "M's" office after a skydiving joust, the perennial Miss Moneypenny asks him, "Why are you late?" To which he replies, "I fell out of an airplane without a parachute. You don't believe me, do you?" Later, when forcing Drax into an airlock leading outside the space station, he says, "Take a giant step for mankind." The film's science fiction elements are pointedly alluded to when the coding signal which operates the entrance to Drax's secret laboratory plays out the tonal chords from CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. And Bond, attired in the hat and blanket of a South American gaucho, rides his horse to "Q's" headquarters to the theme from THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN.

Leaving no stone unturned, the film resurrects Richard Kiel to once again limn the role of "Jaws," last seen in THE SPY WHO LOVED ME. It seems that Jaws has become as indestructible as his heroic counterpart, and even ends up saving Bond's life! Although Bond purists may harp at the level of comedy to which this series has come, MOONRAKER offers glossy entertainment without pretensions, a worthy entry in a seasoned line of successful popcorn pictures. One can now eagerly look forward to the next in the series, FOR YOUR EYES ONLY. After that, only one Fleming story, a short novel titled OCTOPUSSY remains before Broccoli and company begin inventing their own titles (not to mention a steady stream of assorted hair-raising adventures and gadgetry) to follow the indefatigable James Bond. □



Frank Langella's performance is a tad low-key for *The Prince of Darkness*.

DRACULA ". . . is not much worth biting into. . ."

DRACULA A Universal release. 6/79. In Technicolor, Panavision and Dolby stereo. 115 minutes. Produced by Walter Mirisch. Directed by John Badham. Screenplay by W. D. Richter, based on the play by Hamilton Deane and John Balderston, from the novel by Bram Stoker. Director of photography, Gilbert Taylor. Production designer, Peter Murton. Edited by John Bloom. Music by John Williams. Special visual effects by Albert Whitlock.

Dracula Frank Langella
Abraham Van Helsing Laurence Olivier
Jack Seward Donald Pleasence
Lucy Seward Kate Nelligan
Jonathan Harker Trevor Eve
Mina Van Helsing Jan Francis
Annie Janine Duvitski
Milo Renfield Tony Haygarth

Bram Stoker's restless Count is getting a bit too immortal for my taste. And this, the umpteenth reincarnation of the film vampire, cannot (try as it may) convince of the need for another cinematic version. Just as the settings are draped with cobwebs and dust, likewise the ancient storyline has weathered too many revivals, be it onstage or onscreen. Although W. D. Richter's screenplay nearly succeeds in doing something decent with the wretched Hamilton Deane and John Balderston play, DRACULA inevitably suffers, as its title character, because of unhealthy ties with the past.

What remains is only an opportunity for stylish pomp, and director John Badham doesn't miss a trick in "romanticizing" the setting and the characters (especially Dracula), as dictated by Richter's rickety screenplay. In its course, the story grows more and more tame (nothing much really happens after Mina is killed). But Badham routinely

by Jeffrey Frentzen

injects grisly violence to reassure us that this is a horror film. A similar brand of schizophrenia afflicts Richter's rendition of the Dracula myth—the character's nastier self is buried under an over-emphasis on "romance." So when the vampire enacts some gory ritual (as when he gives Renfield a sure cure for his neckache), the brutality throws the film off balance.

What Richter has done in transferring the play to the screen is an improvement. No longer are we forced to sit through Harker's journey to Transylvania—instead the movie gets under sail on the doomed clipper stowing Dracula's gear (which leads off into a series of gratuitous throat-rippings). The play's parlor room stereotypes are rearranged, allowing a tight rein on defining character relationships: "Mina Harker" becomes Van Helsing's daughter, Lucy is now Dr. Seward's vivacious child, and Jonathan Harker embodies some of the attributes of "Quincy," from Stoker's original novel. And for once the entrance of Dr. Van Helsing carries some thoughtful relevance to the filmed proceedings.

Outside of those welcome alterations of the format, Richter still snags on the sluggishness of the story's content, creeping through a quagmire of clichés with the pretense of knowing what he's doing—until we are treated to one of the more unpalatable climaxes to be found in this kind of scenario. It might have been best to return to Stoker's original novel, with its spectacular, violent conclusion in the Carpathians, of Van Helsing's party doing battle with horsemen and thieves before sending Dracula up in a burst of flame. As Richter and Badham would have it, the vampire is impaled on a winch hook and literally run up a flagpole,

though beforehand, in a nice touch, he pins Van Helsing to a wall with his own wooden stake!

Glimpses of gothic in Badham's imagery are frequently creative: when Lucy enters Carfax Abbey, Badham shoots from behind a spider crawls onto the web, Dracula bids her "good evening." But when Badham tries to be clever, he blunders, as when the vampiric Mina's image is seen reflecting in a pool of water. Later, during Van Helsing's laughable "purification" of Mina's soul (he cuts out her heart), the girl's decayed appearance has already changed to one of a clearer complexion. The seduction of Lucy begins with Dracula's stage-y entrance (accompanied by piped-in fog), dissolving to their getting it on, fully-clothed (this must be Richter's idea of a vampire's weird sexual appetite). To heighten the erotica, an anti-climactic 'visual orgasm,' designed by optical/title effects master Maurice Binder and looking much like his famous title sequences from the James Bond films, bathes the two in red—vampire and victim in ecstasy—a tryst on a sunspot. This pat indulgence seems spliced in from another film, and draws little more than an irritated giggle.

The prime focal point, of course, is Frank Langella as Dracula: each "campy" line rolls off his tongue as if each were a bon mot. But the American-accented delivery makes much of the poetic Stoker dialogue. This is not to say that Langella's Dracula is anachronistic; the settings are so lush, however, that Langella's attempts to chew up the scenery (as he did onstage) are useless—the scenery, in this case, chews him up. Overall, the entire performance is a tad low-key for *The Prince of Darkness*. Langell-

la's popular sex appeal in the role is likely to peg him as a glamor boy, not an actor. He fails to convey the sense of perversity and menace that, say, Christopher Lee's dark features could suggest. Langella's portrayal is interesting and different, but it is not good. As such, we must rely on Laurence Olivier (fitted with a Northern European accent leftover from *A LITTLE ROMANCE*) to deliver the one strong lead performance. His Van Helsing is not the psychotic-hero role epitomized by Peter Cushing in the Hammer series; here, Van Helsing is shown as faced with an evil that is, to him, unfamiliar. Rather than draw a portrait of Van Helsing the savior—the unstoppable vampire killer—Olivier is instead the concerned patriarch, helping to destroy the creature that murdered his daughter. Olivier's delivery is an intense range of moods, easily upstaging the non-descript Langella.

The highlight of the film, then, belongs not to Langella but to Olivier, who must search a subterranean catacomb for the transformed Mina. Upon staking her (al-

most accidentally), Olivier grabs the audience with a heartfelt outburst of tragic anguish. As the unfortunate Mina, Jan Francis makes a successful change from Lucy's weak and fragile sidekick to neoneyed succubus, though her seduction scene here has none of the erotic energy that it did onstage. Kate Nelligan appears uneasy in a part that has her fluctuate from maiden to monster. Or is it just that Trevor Eve makes such a pussy-whip out of Jonathan Harker, we can more readily accept her attraction to Dracula? And though Donald Pleasence is oddly restrained as Seward, iron cuffs should have been slapped on Tony Haygarth, whose Renfield is closer to Roy Kinnear than Dwight Frye.

All this is not to exclude an occasional bright moment or inventive camera move (Albert Whitlock's matte work is superlative, as are the makeup credits). But so what? We've been bored to tears once again by a plot as old as the Carpathians. Seeing as how anemic it is, this screen version of *DRACULA* is not much worth biting into. □

UFO BLUE CHRISTMAS

"A disaster film largely devoid of action. . ."

UFO BLUE CHRISTMAS A Toho Films release (No U. S. distribution set). 6/79(78). In color. 120 minutes. Produced and directed by Kihachi Okamoto. Screenplay by So Kurokimo. Director of photography, Daisaku Kimma. Music by Masaru Sato.

With: Tatsuya Nakadai, Yo Katsuno, Keiko Takeshita, Eiji Okada, Kaoru Yachigusa.

In honor of the 25th anniversary of the release of *GODZILLA*, Japan House in New York offered a series of Japanese science fiction films, including this entry, making its American premiere, also known as *BLOOD TYPE BLUE*. It concerns the paranoia that grips civilization when the blood of people who have sighted UFOs turns blue. Have these unlucky persons been taken over by extraterrestrials, or are they aliens in disguise? There's no evidence to support either case, but the possibility

by Judith P. Harris

discrediting Psychoplasemics. As he collects witnesses for the prosecution (Raglan's dissatisfied customers include a man with lymphatic cancer, supposedly caused by Psychoplasemics), Frank has a series of brushes with a pack of tiny monsters, murderers wearing ski jackets, who succeed in killing Nola's parents in vengeful and bloody fashion.

Psychoplasemics is not a science, but a self-serving odyssey of discovery for Raglan—in his care are individuals able to manifest abusive markings (bruises, gashes, etc.) on their bodies using only their powers of concentration and pent-up agonies. Of all his patients, only Nola Carveth has the ability to fully evolve into a transmitter of this unnatural physiological phenomenon. Her angry brooding develops not welts or scars on her body, but an actual external womb, through which she gives birth to the humanoids: beings of annex which cause physical harm to those her frustration needs to repay.

Cronenberg has taken special pains to create a world very close to our true one, a world in desperate need of reassurance, a world slowly torn apart by individual searches for Truth and Revelation: the climate of distrust is a climate in which monsters can breed. Everyone in *THE BROOD*, aside from the children, is self-conscious and preposterously "aware"—when a character displays anger, another questions the sources of his hostility; others drop from sight with a mumble of "I'm sorry but your life is too complex for me right now." It's living by textbook. Viewers are forced to look a little deeper, reason, reflect. It is, therefore, a bit surprising when Frank's Carveth's ugly suspicions about Psychoplasemics—which we have doubted up till now—are proven well-founded. Psychoplasemics is evil. Even so, Frank's deep-buried fear of Raglan

leads to government-imposed blood tests, concentration camps, lobotomies and mass genocide.

The framework of the plot is an investigative report by a TV newsman which points to a world-wide conspiracy and cover-up. Unfortunately, the entire film is composed of ultra-brief sequences, the longest of which lasts two minutes; the flashbacks and montages are so relentless and abrupt, and the dialogue so cryptic, it is pretty hard to follow what action there is. At that, *UFO BLUE CHRISTMAS* is a disaster film largely devoid of action, with all important scenes happening off-screen, conveyed in news reports and conversation. Even the UFOs are merely suggested by bright lights. The allegorical aspects become a trifle heavy-handed at times, and the main character is such a dunce, the film seems much longer than its 120 minutes.

Still, if you're intrigued by the concept of a Japanese science fiction film where Tokyo is not destroyed by a giant monster, *UFO BLUE CHRISTMAS* is a definite change of pace. □

THE BROOD

"...it is without a doubt Cronenberg's most accomplished work."

THE BROOD A New World release. 5/79. 91 minutes. In color. Produced by Claude Heroux (Mutual Productions, Toronto). Written and directed by David Cronenberg. Executive producers, Pierre David and Victor Solnicki. Director of photography, Mark Irwin. Art director, Carol Spier. Edited by Allan Collins. Makeup by Shonagh Jabour. Music by Howard Shore.

Dr. Raglan..... Oliver Reed
Nola Carveth..... Samantha Eggar
Frank Carveth..... Art Hindle
Candice Carveth..... Cindy Hinds
Juliana..... Nuala Fitzgerald
Barton Kelly..... Henry Beckman
Ruth..... Susan Hogan
The Child..... Felix Silla

His name now preceding the title, Canadian director David Cronenberg's third film marks an obvious departure from earlier shackles. Unlike the dangers on view in his *THEY CAME FROM WITHIN* and *RABID*, those flashing through *THE BROOD* are in no way universally applicable, nor

by Tim Lucas

Samantha Eggar births one of The Brood, with external womb grown by Psychoplasemics.



PROPHECY

"This kind of fantasy is an unethical rip-off of reality."

PROPHECY A Paramount Pictures release. 6/79. 106 minutes. In color by Movielab and Panavision. Dolby stereo. Produced by Robert L. Rosen. Directed by John Frankenheimer. Screenplay by David Seltzer. Director of Photography, Harry Stradling, Jr. Production Designer, William Craig Smith. Edited by Tom Rolf. Music by Leonard Rosenman. Special Effects by Robert Dawson. Special Makeup and Artifacts designed by Thomas R. Burman.

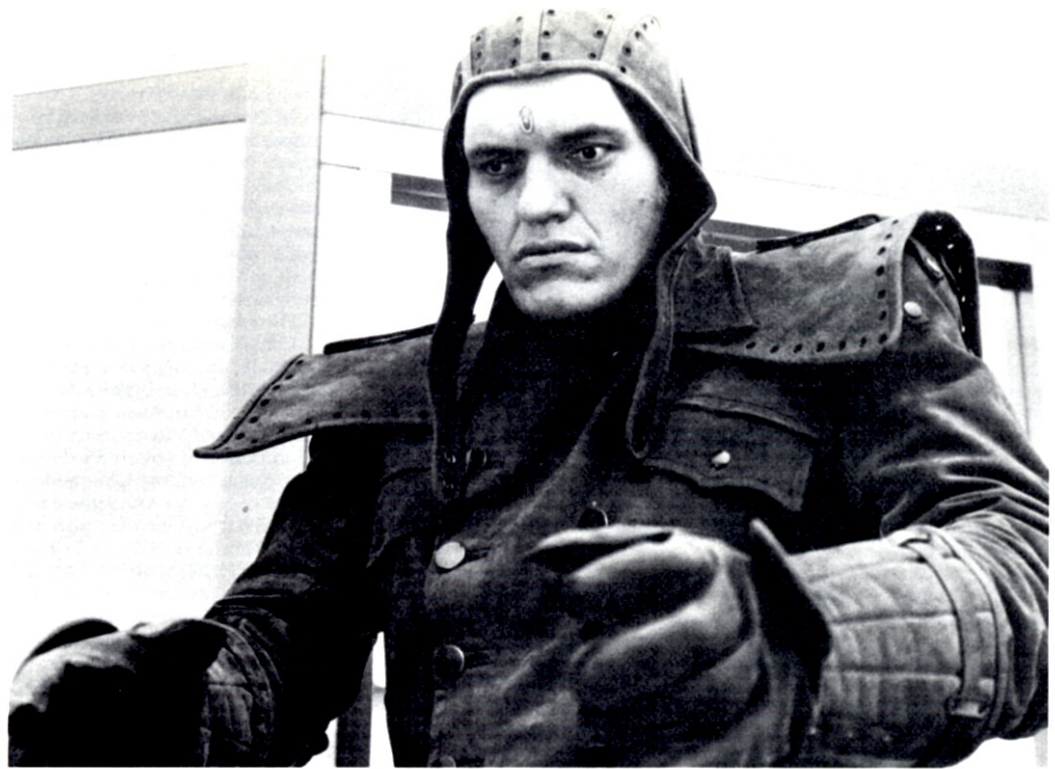
Maggie Talia Shire
 Robert Vern Robert Foxworth
 John Hawks Armand Assante
 Isley Richard Dysart
 Ramona Victoria Racimo
 M'Rai George Clutesi

Director John Frankenheimer, who wanted to film the world's greatest monster movie, has made one of the world's worst. The premise of ecological disaster as a basis for science fiction films was explored in the early Seventies by Peter Fonda's IDAHO TRANSFER (1973), seldom seen and presumably shelved despite a favorable review by Jay Cocks in *Time*; and, earlier, in Cornel Wilde's effective NO BLADE OF GRASS (1970). This important issue, as a filmic theme, has now degenerated into routine, cliched horror movie fodder, thanks to Frankenheimer and screenwriter David Seltzer.

The story has environmentalist Rob Vern and his pregnant, musician wife traveling to Maine where they eventually learn that both Indians and wildlife in the area have methyl-mercury poisoning, courtesy of the local paper mill. Paper mill exec Richard Dysart is disturbed by the protest actions of the local Indian leader, John Hawks—to keep the mill from cutting deeper into the forest and further disrupting his people's home. In this Indian rights subplot, there's a hint of racism, a suggestion that the Indians, without the keen insight of white hero Foxworth, would never have figured things out themselves. Maggie fears for her unborn child, a crisis the climax never resolves, and there is also a reference to "deformed children" offscreen somewhere; one suspects that the filmmakers have purposely avoided this critical area so they wouldn't be accused of "going too far." Thus, PROPHECY cops out on the crucial issue.

Close examination of this entire cheap-shot tale reveals that, in several ways, it parallels the methyl-mercury poisonings in Minamata, Japan, a tragedy mentioned briefly in one or two lines of Foxworth's dialogue. Minamata is a fishing village on the island of Kyushu, and a chemical company, Chisso, began production of acetaldehyde there in 1931. After an upswing in production in 1950, it was noticed that a number of people in Minamata fell ill with the identical symptoms. Cats were observed staggering about. In 1956, with the increase in the number of victims, Dr. Hosokawa, head of the Chisso hospital,

by Robert M. Stewart



Richard "Jaws" Kiel trades in his chromium dentures for a synthetic brain in THE HUMANOID.

THE HUMANOID
 "...has touches of originality setting it apart from other low-budget entries."

THE HUMANOID A Columbia Pictures release. 5/79. In color. 99 minutes. Produced by Giorgio Venturini (Meropa Films). Directed by George B. Lewis. Screenplay by Adriano Bolzoni and Aldo Lado, based on a story by Boldoni. Director of photography, Silvano Ippolito. Special effects supervisor, Armando Valcauda.

Golob Richard Kiel
 Barbara Corinne Clery
 Nick Leonard Mann
 Lady Agatha Barbara Bach
 Kraspin Arthur Kennedy
 Graef Ivan Rassimov
 Tom Tom Marco Yeh

by Alan Jones

announced that the problems arose from eating the bay fish. In October 1959, when Hosokawa came up with a report that Chisso was responsible, the company suppressed this proof. And, that same year, they managed to intimidate the local fisherman's union. Between 1959 and 1968, Chisso continued to poison the water; it was later estimated that 200,000 persons had eaten the fish from Shiranui Sea. Chisso was finally sued in 1969, largely through the dedicated efforts of protest leader Teruo Kawamoto. The court battles stretched on, but, on March 20, 1973, Chisso was held legally responsible and in May of the that year, the government of Japan, ignoring the fact that fish can swim, made the astounding statement that fish outside Minamata Bay were safe!

One of the few people in the United States to take an active interest in the Minamata tragedy was famed *Life* magazine photojournalist W. Eugene Smith (1919-1978). With a sense of personal commitment and no outside funding, Smith arrived in Minamata to

On the planet Noxon, the evil Graef is preparing his Nurek warriors for an attack on Metropolis (Earth). Spearheading the assault is scientist Kraspin's plan to implant "Element Kappa" into the body of a captured space pilot and turn him into an invincible humanoid. He succeeds, but neither he nor the beautiful and youthful Lady Agatha (immortal because of Kraspin's rejuvenation elixir) count on the intrepid Barbara Gibson, her mysterious Tibetan pupil Tom Tom, and dashing young officer Nick. With the de-activated humanoid, they turn the tables on Graef and Kraspin, making the galaxy, once again, a safe place in which to live.

The Nurek costumes are all designed after Darth Vader, and

document the "Chisso-Minamata Disease." Unlike other journalists, Smith and his wife, Aileen Mioko Smith, lived in the village, eating the same fish the villagers ate. His pictures were later exhibited and published in this country in 1975. The most striking of these powerful images shows the motherly concern of a woman bathing her little boy—who sits rigid in a tub with his eyes bugging, staring at the ceiling, while his twisted, claw-like hands rise out of the water.

The Chisso company was obviously aware that Smith was no ordinary newsman doing a half-hearted job; six security thugs employed by Chisso attacked Smith, breaking his camera equipment. Holding him by the legs, they swung him, headfirst, into a wall. He was hospitalized with smashed vertebrae and also suffered recurrent headaches and a partial loss of vision which made it impossible for him to focus his camera and continue working as a photographer. The last few years of his life were spent in poverty in New York, and he died of a stroke in 1978.

there is a lovable mini-robot called Kip the Robodog. Similarities to STAR WARS don't stop there, either, but at least THE HUMANOID has its own touches of originality, differentiating it from other low-budget entries. The special effects range from dreadful (poorly-matted spacecraft portholes) to reasonably impressive (the spaceship landing in the vast Nurek hangar). Richard Kiel trades on his "Jaws" character from the Bond features, but unfortunately cannot match the menace his looks provide with suitable acting conviction. And it should be clear that, although the model work, and indeed the film itself, never rises above the SPACE: 1999 level, THE HUMANOID is undemanding entertainment. □

If PROPHECY really has a concern for the "harsh truth about our environment," as Seltzer puts it, the film could easily have incorporated a few of Eugene Smith's Minamata photographs, not only as a tribute to Smith but also a means of establishing the truth behind the fantasy. It also would have been an interesting way of acknowledging and forming a link with PROPHECY's source—Assante's Indian character is obviously inspired by the Japanese protest leader Kawamoto, and the Dysart character parallels the head of Chisso; Foxworth and Shire, like Eugene and Aileen Smith, are the concerned outsiders.

Frankenheimer's style (or non-style) of visual flash served him well in his fast-paced view of media, machines and political intrigue—THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE (1962), SEVEN DAYS IN MAY (1964)—a world in which he was a participant (in fact, it was Frankenheimer who drove Bobby Kennedy to the Ambassador Hotel on that fateful day of the RFK assassination). And the John Randolph/Grand Central locations of

the 1966 film *SECONDS* ("It's not science fiction," says Frankheimer) remains one of the most chilling depictions of "behavioral sink" urban anxiety you can find. But Frankheimer back to nature? The situation of a group of people trapped in a Maine forest with a lurking, hulking creature plays like it lays, reminding of a dozen made-for-TV movies about families in campers who are menaced in the woods. The timing is out of joint in a year when audiences have been responding to the mixed thriller and heightened political plottings of *THE CHINA SYNDROME*, a movie remarkably similar to the kind John Frankheimer used to make. After going through one hell of a career slump in the early 1970s, Frankheimer snapped back with *FRENCH CONNECTION II* and *BLACK SUNDAY*; he now seems, although one certainly hopes not, heading on his way back down again.

Seltzer and Frankheimer missed an obvious bet: Truth is stranger than fiction, and the time was (and still is) obviously ripe for a movie based on the real events at Minamata, possibly incorporated into a W. Eugene Smith biographical drama. In 1955, Smith, making a courageous stand for journalistic ethics, resigned from *Life*. In 1979, Frankheimer and Seltzer produced a dull, tired monster movie that stands for nothing more than tickets at the boxoffice. This kind of fantasy is an unethical rip-off of reality. □

NIGHTWING

"A potentially gripping situation, gambled away on an actionless story."

NIGHTWING A Columbia Pictures release. 6/79. 105 minutes. In Technicolor. Produced by Martin Ransohoff. Directed by Arthur Hiller. Executive producer, Richard St. Johns. Screenplay by Steve Shagan, Bud Shrake and Martin Cruz Smith, from the novel by Smith. Music by Henry Mancini. Director of photography, Charles Rosher. Special visual effects by Carlo Rambaldi.

Youngman Duran..... Nick Mancuso
Philip Payne..... David Warner
Anne Dillon..... Kathryn Harrold
Walker Chee..... Stephen Macht
Selwyn..... Strother Martin
Abner Tasupi..... George Clutesi

by Jeffrey Frentzen

One of Carlo Rambaldi's radio-controlled bats nibbles on Kathryn Harrold.



THE KIRLIAN WITNESS

"... is eerie and subtle enough to please the genre's most demanding cinephiles. . ."

THE KIRLIAN WITNESS No U.S. distributor set. 1978. 87 minutes. In Technicolor and Panavision. Produced and directed by Jonathan Sarno. Screenplay by Sarno and Lamar Sanders, from an original story by Sarno. Director of photography, Joao Fernandes. Music by Harry Manfredini. Edited by Len Dell'Amico and Edward Salier.

Rilla..... Nancy Snyder
Dusty..... Ted Leplat
Robert..... Joel Colodner
Laurie..... Nancy Boykin

Jonathan Sarno's first feature, *THE KIRLIAN WITNESS*, is a moody whodunnit with occult overtones, about a woman who traces her sister's rooftop murderer through the crime's only eyewitness: a common houseplant. Before you double over in hysterics—as distributors who originally snubbed the film did—it must be stressed that this is a beautifully shot and intelligently acted debut effort that is eerie and subtle enough to please the genre's most demanding cinephiles. Its chief virtue, strangely enough, is Sarno's cold and matter-of-fact approach to the actual crime (re-played several times at slightly different angles), and the heroine's bizarre methods of solving it. Sarno's ability to build suspense through viewer identifica-

by Glenn Lovell

After working up quite a stiff upper lip in *THE OMEN*, David Warner should have kept clear of any role demanding he play it so dead earnest. In *NIGHTWING*, his real enemy is not the vampire bats he so relentlessly hunts, but the story, a frightfully dry and boring chill-killer more likely to produce screams of laughter than of fear. The film is a good example of a director (Arthur Hiller, primarily associated with light comedies) operating in the wrong genre. The thought of vampire bats attacking humans makes for a prosaic translation of *THE BIRDS* cliches, yet Hiller chooses to subdue the action whenever possible—a potentially gripping situation, gambled

tion—while simultaneously keeping his characters at a distance—compares favorably with the detached camera of Chabrol's *LE BOUCHER* and Hitchcock's *THE WRONG MAN*. The Hitchcock comparison is especially apt since both it and *THE KIRLIAN WITNESS* were inspired by bizarre *Police Gazette* accounts.

The script is based on the true-life 1968 murder of a young woman in New Jersey, and subsequent detective work to nab the killer. In reality, the authorities, even more "open-minded" than those who relied on psychic Peter Hurkos to track the Boston Strangler, enlisted the aid of a polygraph expert who believed in "the psychic power of plants." He reportedly hooked up a lie detector to a plant that had "witnessed" the murder, and was able, through "emotional" reactions of the plant toward suspects, to finger the guilty party.

Sarno, obviously skeptical of the "facts" in this strange case, has changed the murder to a freak accident which may or may not involve foul play, and the investigator is now the victim's sister, Rilla. She soon discovers that she shares her dead sister's telepathic sensitivity to plants. In other words, her sister's plants "talk" to Rilla, pass on visions of their mistress' life—and death. Aided by the dead girl's diary, Rilla ventures into the fringe science and phenomena of Kirlian photography.

Her suspicions, investigations, paranoia, and eventual cross-over

away on an actionless story.

We begin with a promising tableau: a rancher's stable mares lie massacred, the blood drained from their bodies. Credibility strains early, as no one seems able to diagnose the bat bites, though any Southwesterner could recognize the marks—but in this scenario, even the local doctor can't figure it out. Ten minutes later, the story grinds to a halt, introducing a banal love interest between brave Maski reservation deputy Duran and vapid city girl Anne Dillon. With all momentum from the first scene gone, Hiller pads things out, cutting to and from the unattractive characters, all terribly ambitious in their personal (Anne Dillon's need to walk out on the Indians), religious (Duran's crusading for Maski superstition) and business (Walker Chee's plans for an industrial reservation) relations. The cameo appearances by Carlo Rambaldi's radio-controlled bats are, perhaps unconsciously, given the back seat to this raging soap storm.

Pains taken to dress up the desert locale with menace, wasted longshots of rocky ridges harboring a "dark secret," further cripple the pace. And when building toward a shock, as before the campsite attack, Hiller inserts a jarring cut from the nicely-sustained tracking to fluttering bats, his style is overly predetermined and manipulative. Scars are scarce in *NIGHTWING*; the only sequence of any power, the invasion of Payne's outdoor "lab,"

into the spiritual world of plants are effectively conveyed through an urgent, muted voice-over narration. A lurking stranger (Ted Leplat), identifying himself as a friend of the sister, and recurring nightmares (with spooky special effects by photographer Joao Fernandes) lead to Rilla's duplication of the polygraph experiment, as well as the film's obvious yet unsettling climax.

Unlike Peter Weir's *THE LAST WAVE*, which takes for granted our belief in supernatural aboriginal forces, *THE KIRLIAN WITNESS* never really attempts to convert us to the heroine's belief in the psychic power of plants. Indeed we, along with Rilla's husband, remain unconvinced to the end. And even then, we're uncertain as to what actually happened and how much is a figment of her imagination. After all, the poor woman goes through a lot of emotional stress, a great deal of it resulting from personal problems with an unsympathetic husband who doesn't share her empathic affinity for unhappy plants.

It is this ambiguity, supported by the story's markedly sombre tone, that leads to a dull sense of dread, almost Dostoevskian in its intensity. Unfortunately, for all his restraint and attention to detail, Sarno has started his career with a film that is more quirky than novel. A pity, since *THE KIRLIAN WITNESS* marks the most stylish and exciting arrival of a genre director since Tobe Hooper gave us the last word on chainsaws. □

is littered with such contrivances as the conveniently non-operational electric fence (and Duran's curious habit of grabbing the fence when it is juiced). Most of the horrors that occur are not bat-related: the woman run over by the truck, or Duran's torch-lit find in the underground ceremonial chamber.

One or two brief thematic cross-parallels, notably Payne's methodical elimination of the bats versus Duran's hallucinogenic datura root inspirations, do offset the uninspired shenanigans. In removing Payne's vengeance-filled motivation found in the novel (the bats tore his father to pieces), the script has created the film's only fundamental and pure hero-figure (Duran's detonation of an entire mountain range full of oil deposits is more stupid than heroic). Such subtlety doesn't last long, though; soon we must endure babblings about how "evil" the bats really are, an offensively literal treatment of what may have been better left unsaid.

With all this the angry talk about oil company land take-overs, depictions of life "how it is" on U. S. government "reserves," or the fascinating concept of an Indian ritual wiping out the white man's world, the linear script fails to investigate these relevancies beyond their motivating a monster movie plot. Such things are superficial filler between bat attacks, producing in the audience a drain of a different sort. □



TERROR
Glynis Barber, pin-up girl.

THE AMITYVILLE HORROR [Stuart Rosenberg] AIP, 7/79, color, 117 minutes. With: James Brolin, Margot Kidder, Rod Steiger.

This film belies the fact that "truth is stranger than fiction." Based on a supposedly true story, it proceeds like one of those European possession flicks so prevalent after *THE EXORCIST*. Once the story is underway, the strange happenings become dull and the plot leads nowhere, except to the Lutz family abandoning their home amid a violent storm. Blood oozes from walls, sewage pours from the toilets, marching bands are heard in the living room at three A. M., and the front door explodes outwards—yet the family doesn't call for help (except the family priest, whom they are never able to reach). Nor do they try to leave for nearly a month. The producers used the earlier killings in the house (twice), exploding windows and imaginary killings by Lutz to beef up the action. The fright scenes are basic and timeworn: the familiar surprise appearance of the family cat, or the children sneaking around where they're not expected, is pretty tame stuff.

Dan Scapperotti

CEMETARY GIRLS [Javier Aguirre] Motion Picture Marketing, 7/79 (72), color, 85 minutes. With: Paul Naschy, Mirra Miller, Vic Winner.

Don't be misled by the inviting trashiness of this film's ad campaign, which implies that it and companion feature, *GRAVE DESIRES*, are new releases. First-billed *CEMETARY GIRLS* is in reality 1972's *DRACULA'S GREAT LOVE*, a slow and uncharacteristically sentimental vampire film featuring Paul Naschy as a short, stout Count. *GRAVE DESIRES*, on the other hand, is an old John Ashley starrer originally shown as *BRIDES OF BLOOD* (1968), the first in the forgettable 'Blood Island' trilogy. Sitting through both features is like watching paint dry. Beware!

Jeffrey Frentzen

DRACULA AND SON [Edouard Molinaro] Quartet Films, 6/79(75), color, 87 minutes. With: Christopher Lee, Bernard Menez, Bernard Alane, Anna Gael, Claude Genia.

Finally getting tossed onto the exploitation circuit, this first film by director Edouard Molinaro (LA

CAGE AUX FOLLES) was a sheer delight in its original French-language form. But what was once a fairly sophisticated satire of the vampire genre has become, through horrendous English-dubbing and a mindless cartoon intro, an unfunny patsche a la Woody Allen's *WHAT'S UP, TIGER LILY*. But without the Allen calibre of humor, Christopher Lee's "French" dialogue is reworked into bad one-liners delivered by an American voice matching neither Lee's timbre nor timing. Bernard Menez, as his son, now sounds like Don Adams. The elegant photography is in complete contrast to the aural assault imposed by the U. S. distributors.

Bill Kelley

THE LIFE OF BRIAN [Terry Jones] Warner Bros/Orion, 7/79, color, 92 minutes. With: Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin.

The caustic tone of irreverence and mocking of Biblical prophecy is probably enough to send the more devout Holy worshippers storming in offense, while the rest break up laughing. This is a funny, funny movie, a loud satire that goes straight for the marrow; the low-scale *BEN HUR* parody is mixed with gangsterism, terrorism, crucifixion, fornication, racism, science fiction and other stray elements you might find in a Monty Python film. And though *THE LIFE OF BRIAN* is no match for *MONTY PYTHON AND THE HOLY GRAIL*, in terms of intelligent comedy it is a goldmine.

Jeffrey Frentzen

RAVAGERS [Richard Compton] Avco-Embassy, 6/79, color, 91 minutes. With: Richard Harris, Ann Turkel, Art Carney.

Perhaps to get it all out of his system, producer Saul David has concocted another version of *LOGAN'S RUN*, this time without the inflated budget, but of the same poverty-row mentality. Harris is "running" from a post-holocaust society of cutthroats responsible for killing his wife; talk is that a "sanctuary" called Genesis lies at the seashore. Genesis turns out to be a cannibalized oil tanker run by dictatorial Ernest Borgnine. Some utopia! In lieu of an ending, the tanker blows up (as did the com-

RAVAGERS

Richard Harris heads out into a ravaged post-holocaust wasteland.



THE AMITYVILLE HORROR
Margot Kidder and James Brolin—they don't know a haunted house when they see one.

puter city in *LOGAN'S RUN*), leaving Harris to ponder, life in the future is no Carousel.

Jeffrey Frentzen

SCREAMS OF A WINTER NIGHT [James K. Wilson] Dimension, 7/79, color, 93 minutes. With: Matt Borel, Gil Glasgow, Mary Agen Cox, Patrick Byers, Robin Bradley.

An anthology of terror filmed on a shoestring in Natchitoches, Louisiana by local talent. In the frame story, a group of teen campers bore one another with practical jokes and tales of the supernatural while holed-up together in a cabin in the woods. Same cast dramatizes each story as it unfolds: first involves unsolved attacks of a Big Foot-like hairy thing which leaves tiny teethmarks on the bodies of its victims; second recounts a fraternity initiation in a haunted house in which the participants mysteriously vanish or are driven mad; third is a standard tale of a sexually-repressed psycho-killer, a college coed. The frame story wraps it all up with an Indian wind demon, the only section that manages to come across with any intensity. The blowup from 16mm is obvious, and the acting is drama-class calibre, but director Wilson manages nicely with the limited resources at hand.

Frederick S. Clarke

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME [George McGowan] Allied Artists, 6/79, color, 91 minutes. With: Jack Palance, Barry Morse, Carol Lynley, Eddie Benton.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO

COME is in such sad shape; one more entry in the *STAR WARS* rip-off cycle that steals H. G. Wells' name at the same time. Story has nothing to do with the William Cameron Menzies 1936 film, but rather, operates on a childish, *SPACE: 1999* level, having much ado over radiation poisoning, villainous senators running a post-atomic war city called New Washington, and cute robots with voices stolen from the Cylons of *BATTLE-STAR GALACTICA*. This multiple plagiarism is getting out of hand.

Robert H. Brown

TERROR [Norman J. Warren] Crown, 7/79(78), color, 86 minutes. With: John Nolan, Carolyn Courage, James Aubrey, Sarah Keller.

In present-day London, the last in the line of a cursed family makes a horror movie depicting how his family burned a witch at the stake a hundred years ago. At a private party after the screening, his cousin is hypnotized and tries to kill him with a sword. On the way home from the party, a guest is skewered to a tree. The cousin's roommate and a film studio employee are also bumped off. What has this to do with the curse? A couple of these set pieces, such as the levitating car, might have looked good on paper, but they are merely ludicrous on-screen. The pace is slow, padded with a lot of meandering sideplots and red herrings, including a cameo by knock-kneed Peter Mayhew, sans his Chewbacca makeup.

Judith P. Harris

UP FROM THE DEPTHS [Charles B. Griffith] New World, 7/79, color, 75 minutes. With: Sam Bottoms, Suzanne Reed, Virgil Frye.

Similar to how I'd imagine a schlock horror film directed by Norman Mailer: the image is grainy, the sound is muddled, the actors mug uncontrollably, and nothing happens after the first two minutes. A real chum bucket item, obviously New World's follow-up to last year's *PIRANHA*, minus wit, coherency or budget. The most unconvincing rubberoid sea monster since *MONSTER FROM THE OCEAN FLOOR* pops up once or twice, whenever director Griffith feels the stock *JAWS* charade is becoming a bore. Too bad the trick doesn't work.

Jeffrey Frentzen



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Giger's Alien

Upon reading the article "Whatever Happened to Jim Danforth's TIMEGATE" [8:4:9], I found myself wondering, "whatever happened to responsible journalism?" You present the article as a representation of the facts surrounding the demise of this project, but in reality it is an indiscriminate juxtaposition of fact and opinion. The quotes at the top of page 11 are an excellent example of this and, in my opinion, Mr. Subotsky's statement on the psychological capabilities of Mr. Danforth to direct live action border on slander. You let this stand without any mention of Danforth's previous directorial assignments (both in films—WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH—and commercials). Do you agree with Subotsky? Unfortunately, it appears so, for if you are only representing the facts then you must also consider this to be fact? It also appears that a scapegoat was needed for the demise of TIMEGATE, and you were more than happy to help Subotsky find one in Jim Danforth.

I, for one, sincerely hope that this article does not harm Danforth's career, but anyone reading it would wonder if Danforth is capable of handling visual effects or live action. I doubt very much that you are concerned with the consequences of this article, for, unfortunately, it appears that you are not.

KAREN TUTTLE
Van Nuys CA 91406

[I specifically asked Jim Danforth if he wished to respond to Milton Subotsky's allegation. Danforth felt that Subotsky's charge was beneath the dignity of a reply. Do I agree with Subotsky, you ask? I don't know. After months of exhaustive research, I was unable to reconcile the conflicting reports of why the film was cancelled. All I could do was attempt to report the opinions off all the principal parties without bias.]

For the record, THE ALIEN FACTOR [8:4:29] is the first animation film to be refused distribution, not

PLANET OF DINOSAURS. It has not, in fact, been distributed in the Far East, but I understand things are hopeful; the film has not been successful here or in any other country to my knowledge. Gold Key [syndicators] picked up the film for around \$5000, which was just enough to handle some remaining lab costs. [Director] Don Dohler had the 35mm cropping printed on the film, so it had to have a new negative made for TV even though the film was originally shot in 16mm. I seriously doubt that Cinemagic Visual Effects will ever see the film break even: a quick look at the science fiction package that Gold Key has assembled will show many bottom-of-the-barrel crappers (such as INVASION FROM INNER EARTH). Dohler could not find a U. S. distributor because of the picture's inferior quality. I don't mean to fault Dohler or THE ALIEN FACTOR, in fact I'd love to see the film make money. It was just a good idea gone wrong.

What really riles me are the pompous producers of THE CRY OF CTHULHU. Now be mindful that I do not have anything personal against these people. Let me explain: when I started out in films seven years ago, it was very tough to get work. To coin a phrase, I had to pay my dues to get to the low position I have now. Now these CTHULHU producers come along, and to my knowledge neither one has any real hardcore feature film experience, saying that someone has given them \$7 million! That's ridiculous. And I know that not one thin dime has been raised! Who would invest millions in a couple of filmmakers with no proven track record whatsoever? Jim Danforth can't even get funding, and he's twice-nominated for an Academy Award! Sure it's Cthulhu, but what can Arkham House say—they have no particular claim to the Lovecraft Mythos, and Arkham House Publishing may have no rights to any Lovecraft works at all. Let's face it, anybody can make a Cthulhu film if he wants to. I understand that various people have actually agreed

to work on the film if the money is raised, but it is doubtful that it ever will be. Notice no stars have been mentioned?

Let me say that I may be completely wrong, but I doubt it. I really like to see independent production flourish outside Hollywood, but I don't like people soiling the image of the indies by preposterous boasting and (dare I say) outright and deliberate fabrication. You'd have to make your own feature film for \$60-70,000 to know what I mean. You'd have to be there with the struggle and frustration and endless aggravation that goes with it, while people like the producers of THE CRY OF CTHULHU bask in semi-fame and have not worked for it or earned it.

FRED OLEN RAY
Orlando FL 32859

[Ray's Firebird International Pictures makes low-budget features that play almost exclusively at drive-ins in the southeast. His first feature, THE BRAIN LEECHES, was filmed in black-and-white. His new film, IT FELL FROM THE SKY, premiered in August, in color, starring Gunnar Hansen.]

Please correct some misinformation in your article on THE CRY OF CTHULHU [8:4:29]. I am not the owner of Arkham House, as you report. Arkham House is owned by the children of August Derleth, who founded the publishing house. Their names are April Derleth Smith and Walden Derleth, and they are co-equal owners. I am the legal counsel as well as a Director.

I am also concerned with the accuracy of your statement that Arkham House "appears to get no fee or profit participation from the project." I can understand how you picked this up, but you will recall that I was careful to say that this sort of information is never given out, and I was making no statement regarding this to you.

FORREST D. HARTMANN
Baraboo WI 53913

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CARTOON BY CHRIS KINSINGER

There is an old, old joke on page 52 of the FORBIDDEN PLANET issue [8:2/8:3]. You state in a caption to one of the photographs, and I quote in part, "...the graveyard where Morbius buried the survivors of the Bellerophon expedition. . ." Now, to the best of my knowledge, you don't bury survivors!

RONALD M. NOVINSON
APO San Francisco CA 96346

I keep wondering what keeps you people going. I should think that despair would have squashed your so-called "sense of wonder." After all, hardly any films nowadays meet your approval, except perhaps PHANTASM and CAPRICORN ONE. STAR WARS was too much fun. CLOSE ENCOUNTERS is nice, but its aliens are too cute. ALIEN is too yucky and, besides, it reminds you of a still you saw from PLANET OF THE VAMPIRES. What keeps you going? I'll hazard a guess and say "a sense of hypocrisy." I keep running across articles devoted to films which you feel are beneath your standards, but still have pretty neat special effects. Your feature on CLOSE ENCOUNTERS [7:3/7:4:4] was a monument to this hypocrisy. Although it was an overall stunning piece of work, you began the whole thing by stating what a really shitty flick CLOSE ENCOUNTERS is.

In fact, once you stopped offering your silly opinions, the magazine got enjoyable. I would have liked it even without the pretty pictures and super-heavy glossy paper. The only other article your maga-

zine has ever put before me, which I enjoyed, was the interview with Stephen King [8:1:12]. It was great, because your opinions were not extended. In fact, you let King do a great deal of the talking.

I find it odd that all you great science fiction minds have not produced any really worthwhile movies lately—not this stuff Spielberg and Lucas are putting out. Maybe one day you'll stop talking down other people's successes and put your money where your mouth is.

SARA CAMPBELL
Oshkosh WI 54901

[If you have a Sense of Wonder, it can never be squashed. If you don't, however, you may be one of those doomed to sit, zombie-like, through an endless stream of mediocrity that passes for horror, fantasy and science fiction on the screen today, without even questioning what you see. What keeps me going? I can still feel the buzz from seeing 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY in 1968, and that could last me the rest of my life.]

Your FORBIDDEN PLANET issue [8:2/8:3] states that the Barron workprint contains scenes not included in the final release print. Yet I clearly remember seeing many of the very scenes you described during a regular 1956 theatrical screening. I believe these sequences were excised only at a later date.

You identify the present location of both the 20" and 88" saucer miniatures, but not of the 44". This medium-sized model was purchased in 1971 through the MGM prop auction by John Martini, now of San Francisco. The model,

bought for about \$20, was subsequently lost (or possibly stolen).

One of the reasons that Variety's box office figures for FORBIDDEN PLANET are surprisingly low may be unreported income of admissions from the Quaker Oats promotional ad campaign.

DR. MARC MARCINI
Dept. of Cinema, USC
Los Angeles CA 90007

[A continuity script for the film shows that the short version was released. You may have seen one of the film's previews, at which longer versions were tested. The Quaker Oats kiddie passes would only have increased the box office gross, because each free child admission (25-35¢) would have been more than offset by the required accompanying adult admission (\$1.00-\$1.50). But many theatre owners balked at honoring the passes anyway.]

Please correct an error in the photo caption on page 88 of your interview with Gene Roddenberry on STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE [see 8:2/8:3]. Richard Taylor had nothing to do with designing the bridge set for the movie. Taylor was Robert Abel's art director responsible for special effects, until both of them left the picture in a dispute that has been widely publicized. The set which you picture was originally designed by Joe Jennings for the new television series, then redesigned by Hal Michelson and the Paramount art department when the project became a feature film.

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